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ABSTRACT

A practicum was conducted primarily to increase prekindergarten teachers' skills as well as their personal feelings of competence and confidence as they worked in interest centers set up and planned by other teachers. A secondary goal was to decrease the number of interruptions during the school day due to questions and problems resulting from the use of another teacher's plans. Need for the practicum was evidenced by parents' complaints regarding teachers' skill levels and was substantiated by data from teacher self-evaluation questionnaires. To address practicum goals, each prekindergarten teacher prepared and presented a workshop relative to her area of specialization. Workshops focused on the teachers' philosophies, goals, and objectives; scope and sequence; and activities and uses of materials. In addition, they showed how these factors translated into daily lesson plans. Analysis of data revealed positive outcomes of the intervention. Participating teachers indicated on an evaluation form that the information conveyed in each of the four sessions was valuable. A post-questionnaire revealed measurable growth in specific skill areas, and parental complaints ceased. (Related materials are appended.) (Author/RH)

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N O V A U N I V E R S I T Y

An Inservice Training Program to Increase Skills of Teachers in Prekindergarten Interest Centers

by

Virginia Haley

A Practicum Report Presented to the Ed. D. Program
in Early Childhood
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

NOVA UNIVERSITY

1984

PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

This practicum took place as described.

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July 12, 1984
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This practicum report was submitted by Virginia Haley under the direction of the reviewer listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Early Childhood and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in Early Childhood at Nova University.

Approved:

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Abstract

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Descriptors: Faculty Development/Inservice Teacher Education/Learning Centers/Staff Development/Teacher Effectiveness/Teacher Improvement/Teacher Participation/Teacher Workshops/Teaching Models/Team Teaching/Team Training

The primary goal of this practicum concentrated on increasing prekindergarten teachers' skills as well as their personal feelings of competence and confidence as they worked in interest centers set up and planned by other teachers. A secondary goal was to decrease the number of interruptions during the school day with questions and problems resulting from the use of another teacher's plans.

The need for the practicum was evidenced by parental complaints regarding teachers' skill levels, substantiated by data from teacher self-evaluation questionnaires.

In addressing the goals of the practicum, this writer set up and implemented a series of inservice workshops, prepared and presented by each prekindergarten teacher relative to her area of specialization. Workshops focused on the teachers' philosophies, goals and objectives, scope and sequence, activities and uses of materials--showing how these factors translated into daily lesson plans.

Analysis of the data revealed positive results. For each of the four sessions, participating teachers indicated via an evaluation form that the information conveyed was of value to them. A post-questionnaire revealed measurable growth in specific skill areas, and parental complaints ceased.

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

The Work Setting and the Writer

The University School of Nova University is a private, independent, non-profit school for children from preschool through twelfth grade. Since its opening in 1970-71, its enrollment has increased from 100 to over 1300 by 1983. The University School now has two campuses, the Davie campus (preschool through grade twelve) and the Coral Springs campus (prekindergarten through grade eight). It is part of Nova University's "School Center," an administrative unit that also includes Camp Nova (a nine-week academically-oriented summer camp) and the Oral School of Nova University, a division presently under construction with plans to open in the fall of 1984. The University School is fully accredited by both the elementary and secondary bodies of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, by the Florida Council of Independent Schools, and by the Association of Independent Schools of Florida.

The school operates as a day school and draws the majority of its population from Broward County; however, students come from as far south as Miami Beach and as far north as Boca Raton. Students are accepted into the program on the

basis of prior school records, recommendations, and personal interviews as well as a testing procedure that provides both an evaluation of the child's learning in previous school settings and a measure of his or her ability to learn in the University School environment. Students of average, above average, and exceptional ability are considered for admission. The school does not have the resources to meet the needs of students with severe learning, behavioral, or emotional problems, and such students are referred to other appropriate schools in the community. According to the most recent promotional bulletin (Nova University, 1983), virtually all (97%) University School graduates go to college.

Faculty members are selected from applicants from all over the country and are highly qualified as well as state-certified. Of the approximately 150 teachers and administrators, over half have earned graduate degrees (including doctorates) and one-third are presently enrolled in advanced degree programs. In addition, staff members are thoroughly experienced in techniques of individualized instruction.

The school is committed to the belief that each child is unique and strives to educate each child according to his or her ability, developmental level, and learning style. Thus, progress is an individual matter, as each child grows intellectually and physically according to his or her own rate. The school environment is humanistic, warm, and nur-

turing although academic expectations of students are high. The basic skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic as well as computer literacy and word processing are integral to the school's curriculum. Thus the school blends that which has been found to be traditionally sound with innovations deemed necessary for success in the high technology world of the future.

In the Lower School (preschool through kindergarten for children two and a half to six years of age), the learning environment has been set up using an interest center approach. In the four such centers (Play and Communicate--language arts; Play and Learn--mathematics and problem-solving; Play and Discover--science and art; and Play and Imagine--social studies and imaginative play), instruction in the basic skills is combined with the development of concept formation, social competence, creative expression, and sensorimotor skills. Each child has a teacher who is part of a teaching team. This team plans a total program for all children, providing variations in objectives, activities, and materials used so as to accommodate the special needs of the individual child: Each child--at any point in his or her progress through the school program--is acquiring basic skills, practicing these skills, and using the reinforced skills creatively as he or she interacts with materials within the planned environment of each center.

The writer of this practicum had a variety of educational experiences prior to her present position at the University School. Such experiences include teaching English for six years, one year in a junior high school and the other five in a high school; operating a state-licensed day care home (for children from birth to six years of age) for three years while earning a master's degree; working in the Broward County Program for the Visually Impaired (children ages 3 to 5); and working in the University School prekindergarten and kindergarten as a parent volunteer. Joining the University School staff in the fall of 1979, this writer worked with two other teachers to develop and implement a preschool program for children 2½ to 4 years of age. The following year was spent on the prekindergarten team, planning the language arts program for children 4 to 5 years of age and teaching the total program to one of the four classes. For the past two years this writer has served in her present position as team leader of the prekindergarten team. In addition to full-time teaching duties and responsibilities, the team leader coordinates, administers, and supervises all activities of the team of four teachers and two teacher aides. Specific responsibilities relevant to the problem discussed in this practicum report include the following:

1. Assisting in the orientation of new staff members to University School philosophy and program

2. Scheduling and conducting weekly team meetings for program planning and assessment and for discussion of team needs and concerns

3. Coordinating efforts of the teaching team and Director to meet specific individual needs of children

4. Conferring regularly with Director in regard to progress, needs, and/or concerns of Lower School teachers, students, parents

5. Offering consistent "avenues" for communication with teammates and parents

6. Scheduling effective use of teacher-aides and parent volunteers

The Community

Broward County is a popular sunbelt community which has experienced a period of explosive population growth and economic expansion within the past fifteen years. Tourism continues to be the biggest industry, but a movement to attract other industries as well is currently underway. According to the "1981-82 Report of the Superintendent of the School Board of Broward County, Florida," its public school system--with its 160 schools and 127,000 students--now ranks as the second largest in the state of Florida, the tenth largest in the United States, and the nation's largest fully accredited school system.

Critics believe, however, that this quantitative growth has been achieved at the expense of quality education. Although the instructional programs claim to provide both

basic knowledge and enrichment to all students, whether vocationally-oriented or college bound, educational achievement is considered by many to be low. In addition, the system has suffered from adverse publicity regarding problems which tend to plague all large school systems in the United States, problems such as assaults on students and teachers, vandalism, arson, theft, extortion, weapon possession, and drug abuse.

Thus concerned parents, seeking to provide an education of the highest quality in a safe and secure environment, explore the educational alternatives provided by private schools. According to market surveys, most University School parents are dissatisfied with the quality of education offered by the neighborhood public schools and have heard about the University School through word-of-mouth. They are for the most part from the upper-middle class and are engaged in professional or semi-professional vocations. They appreciate the school's humanistic approach, high standards of academic excellence, and its policies of individualized instruction, close home contact, and small class size. Although they tend to be active supporters of its programs, they also have high expectations of such programs and those people responsible for them and expect the staff to be responsive to their personal needs as they arise.

Chapter II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Statement of the Problem

The University School prekindergarten program uses an interest center approach. That is, both the curriculum content and the physical space are organized into four main areas as previously described. Each member of the four teacher team specializes in a different curriculum area and helps all team members plan, teach, and evaluate in the area of her specialty. This teacher is responsible for setting up a particular center and takes the major leadership responsibility for determining goals and objectives; developing units and lessons to carry out these objectives; selecting appropriate activities; determining and securing the necessary resources for particular learning situations; suggesting how the children are to be grouped each day; and providing evaluative techniques for measuring children's achievement. Each day, after implementing her lesson with her own class, she moves to the next learning center with her class where she implements that teacher's plan for the day. This rotation continues throughout the morning in order that each class can work in each of the four interest centers.

The University School accepts children representing a wide range of differences in ability and previous exposure.

Moreover, instruction is expected to be highly individualized as appropriate. Thus, goals are different for each child, as are the means used to attain these goals. The planning teacher must be certain to provide sufficient activities and materials to accommodate the needs of all the learners and sufficient information so that the other three teachers may productively utilize the plan.

It became increasingly apparent that a problem had developed as a result of the structure of this teaching situation. Each prekindergarten teacher had become more competent and confident in the particular interest center for which she planned. An unevenness developed in the respective skill levels, and therefore the effectiveness of the teachers as they traveled from one interest center to the next with their classes was diminished.

Documentation of the Problem

The problem was initially brought to the attention of this writer by the Lower School Director. She reported that several parents who volunteered weekly in the prekindergarten interest centers had observed discrepancies in skills when comparing the styles and methods of the four teachers. These alleged discrepancies were felt to exist not only between the teachers (who did in fact have varying degress of teaching experience) as they worked in a particular interest

center, but also within a single teacher as she traveled from one interest center to the next with her class. Specifically, it was reported that teachers were most skilled in the interest centers for which they planned.

The Lower School Director estimated that there had been six or seven such complaints during the first three months of the school year, a number representing approximately 10% of the prekindergarten parents. The teachers themselves concurred with this percentage when asked to estimate the number of parents dissatisfied with the existing situation. This percentage, although not large, was significant in a private school setting where parents are regarded as clientele. These parents, believing that their children would benefit academically, urged the Director to departmentalize the prekindergarten; that is, they recommended that each teacher remain in the interest center for which she planned, teaching each of the four classes in turn, a procedure followed in the University School kindergarten.

The Director suggested that frequent after school team meetings, held to discuss all interest center plans for the next day, could minimize the discrepancies. However, a subsequent team discussion of the situation revealed that staff members did in fact view themselves as less competent and therefore felt less confident in certain areas and with certain activities. Teachers expressed particular doubt in

their abilities to meet the needs of both developmentally delayed and advanced children as well as they believed the planning teacher to be doing. They reported noticing one another using materials in ways not specified in the daily lesson plans. They also noted the frequency of interruptions during the day to clarify one another's plans. Moreover, team members admitted to difficulties in responding to specific questions from parents in regard to the progress of their children in skill areas pertinent to those interest centers planned by other teachers.

To document such feelings, a questionnaire (Appendix A) was developed by this writer and administered to the four prekindergarten teachers. It was intended that this questionnaire also serve as a needs assessment survey and that its findings when analyzed and charted be an important consideration in implementing the proposed solution strategy. The four teachers were also asked to estimate the number of parents they believed to be concerned over the practicum problem (Appendix B) and the frequency with which questions and problems arose throughout the school day and/or week in regard to implementing one another's lesson plans (Appendix C).

Information obtained from the evaluation instruments did indeed support the existence of the problem presented in this practicum. Results of the questionnaire revealed

that planning teachers rated themselves significantly higher when considering the various aspects of planning, implementing, and evaluating activities in their own interest centers than in the interest centers planned by teammates. These results are presented in graph form in Appendix D. Teachers estimated the number of concerned parents to represent 10% of the prekindergarten population. The frequency estimates of questions and problems related to teachers' lesson plans ranged from eight per day to three per week. It was clear that a more specific definition of "questions/problems" and a system for documenting such occurrences was needed.

Analysis of the Problem

A number of related factors contributed to the evolution of the current problem: namely, the wide range of entry level skills of the children; the University School's high standards of academic excellence; its commitment to individualized instruction; and the high expectations of those parents who have chosen this program for their children. Each of these factors was examined as to the specific part it played in causing the practicum problem.

Five years ago the University School created a preschool program for children ages two and a half to four. Enrollment in this program grew from 36 in the 1979-80 school year to 64

during the 1983-84 school year. The great majority of these children--some of whom had already spent two years in the preschool--continued their schooling in the prekindergarten. For most children, then, the prekindergarten year represented the second or even the third year of full day schooling. Other children had part time preschool experiences in other settings. The remaining few (approximately 10%) had no previous school experience. Thus, the entry level abilities and skills of children in the program were diverse, and as the school year progressed an even greater range of abilities and skills emerged.

Many students arrived with highly developed skills in the areas of socialization, appropriate classroom behaviors and independent work habits, and advanced levels of academic readiness. Little time had to be spent acclimating these children to the classroom routines and procedures and teaching them basic concepts and skills. Such children, in fact, presented a real challenge to the teachers, who had to increase the time and effort put into planning in order to meet their needs. Teachers sought information in journals and resource books, thereby becoming familiar with recent trends and the best practices as presented in the literature of their areas of specialty as well as with the related resources of the school and the community. They then in many instances developed their own materials and activities

after analyzing higher level tasks and devising ways of presenting them appropriately to younger children. In so doing, they gained considerable expertise in their specialties--expertise which was not being conveyed satisfactorily to teammates via the daily lesson plans.

The remaining causative factors--the school's unqualified commitment to academic excellence and the acquisition and utilization of basic skills, its equally strong commitment to individualized instruction, and parents' high expectations of teachers as well as expectations for their own children--served to compound the situation as described above. To begin with, the prekindergarten program included a vigorous academic curriculum which was closely integrated with elements traditionally sound in early childhood education--elements relating to positive social, emotional, physical, and creative growth. Were the program not so academically ambitious, the problem presented in this practicum would be minimal.

Secondly, the prekindergarten team had developed a highly individualized approach, wherein teachers were expected to plan a total and individual program for each child, carefully sequencing individual and small group lessons for the child's specific skill development. Again, were the program not so individualized, the practicum problem would be less significant.

Finally, having selected the University School's program, parents maintained a deep interest in the school and their educational expectations for their children were high. The teachers, moreover, encouraged parent involvement and strove to maintain open, positive lines of communication with each parent. The use of parents as volunteers in the classrooms was valued as a means to further individualize instruction and to promote closer contact between parents and staff, among other reasons. These volunteers, however, did observe weaknesses and commented among themselves and to other parents about what the school was or was not doing for their children. When dissatisfied, they readily made their opinions known, even suggesting how situations should be resolved. To avoid even more serious problems, weaknesses had to be immediately examined and remedied. In this case, a solution to the problem of discrepancies in the prekindergarten teachers' skill levels had to be found in order to maintain the high level of instruction parents had come to expect.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

An extensive search of team teaching literature failed to yield any articles which pertained directly to this writer's work situation--that is, a prekindergarten team structure wherein teachers specialized in setting up and

planning for one interest center while teaching in other centers using lesson plans conceptualized by teammates. The major portion of team teaching literature was found to date back to the middle and late 1960s and to be primarily concerned with the practical aspects of team teaching--such as procedures for inaugurating the team approach, obstacles to be overcome, utilization of the physical plant and material resources, and use of personnel--and with examining model programs. Journal articles published during the last five years pertained largely to team teaching in other fields, primarily health care. The few articles that did relate to primary education were situation specific and focused on the more typical team structure in which each team member taught her area of specialty to all classes. None duplicated that of the writer's job setting.

Useful pieces of knowledge and information were to be found within these sources, however. Bair and Woodward (1964) dismissed most definitions of team teaching as "clinically cold" and failing to reflect the spirit of what was being defined. They preferred this statement by Dean and Witherspoon:

> "The heart of the concept of team teaching lies not in details of structure and organization but more in the essential spirit of cooperative planning, constant collaboration, close unity, unrestrained communication, and sincere sharing. It is reflected not in a group

> of individuals articulating together, but rather in a group which is a single, unified team. Inherent in the plan is . . . an invigorating spirit of freedom and opportunity to revamp programs to meet the educational needs of children."

This writer shared Bair and Woodward's appreciation of this inspiring statement and considered it an appropriate point from which to consider solution strategies as it speaks to the goal of better learning opportunities for children to be achieved largely through a team effort.

Bair and Woodward further cited evidence that sharing ideas and techniques in sessions specifically planned for this purpose resulted in better teaching methodology for a group of teachers who thereby became more effective with pupils and that self-evaluation by a group of teachers was far superior to the introspection and self-analysis of the individual teacher.

In supporting specialized preparation for elementary teachers, Gough (1982) stated that teachers cannot teach effectively what they have not mastered themselves. She claimed that when teachers were given the freedom to concentrate their studies in areas that matched their interests and skills, they planned more intensive and rigorous academic programs, developed greater familiarity with a greater range of instructional materials and uses within that range, and manifested greater knowledge of theoretical approaches to meeting individual needs. Gough's statements

substantiate a cause of the discrepancies of skills apparent within the writer's own team.

Spodek (1972), writing in a similar vein, emphasized the importance of planning in early childhood education. He showed how goals and objectives, the use of physical space and materials, class and individual schedules, and grouping arrangements must be established so that classroom activities accumulate to help children achieve their educational goals. When little prior thought and preparation went into planning, day-to-day learning activities which resulted were limited. Conversely, teachers who read books and attended lectures, seminars, and workshops to develop their own interests and skills, grew as educators, often rethinking their own educational approaches. Spodek's comments also had implications relative to the practicum problem.

Davis (1966) spoke of the opportunities for professional growth afforded as a natural outgrowth of the team teaching process. In his view team members contribute to each other's development in an "inservice training program" that becomes a daily routine--not a special problem. He found that opportunities for interaction within a teaching team are seldom matched in traditional settings, and new and less experienced teachers develop rapidly in such situations. The teacher planning and cooperation built into the team teaching process enhance the opportunities of an up-

to-date and well-informed instructional staff.

In studying the impact of team teaching on teachers, Bair and Woodward (1964) discovered that teachers found much personal satisfaction in the opportunities to refine their teaching practices as members of a teaching team. Team teachers made greater use of their individual creative talents as they thought through and planned what they were going to teach and in so doing developed new and more effective approaches to teaching. As they increasingly recognized the magnitude of the teaching task--particularly the need for curriculum development and enhancement of teaching skills--it was common for team teachers to willingly work longer hours, developing an unusual <u>espirit de corps.</u>

Beggs (1964) stressed that "any school which undertakes a team teaching approach should also be committed to an extensive inservice education program." Jones, in the Beggs' text, stated that "probably the best inservice training device used is the workshop." This writer's search of recent literature in the area of staff development produced volumes of related journal articles. The need for quality staff development programs has emerged as a crucial concern for the 1980s and is considered greater than ever before (Rogus, 1982; Byrne, 1982; Fessler and Burke, 1982) in this time of limited teacher turnover and increased pressure for accountability. The Rand Corporation report on federally supported programs for educational change pointed out that

if schools are to install the improved curriculum and instructional plans now in existence, the 1980s must be the decade of staff development. In their study, according to Wood and Thompson (1980), the innovative projects that made a lasting difference in schools emphasized concrete, teacher-specified, extended inservice education.

In a particularly relevant article Griffin (1982) stressed that "educators individually and collectively need opportunities to grow and change as their field of practice grows and changes." He examined research studies conducted over the last fifteen years in an attempt to discover strategies for effective staff development programs for promoting positive change on the part of teachers and other school personnel. He concluded that staff development programs should:

1. be participatory and designed as a consequence of systematic problem identification by those persons most directly related to the problems
2. be situation specific (within reasonable limits)
3. be flexible and responsive to the changes in participants and the changes in the setting
4. mitigate to some degree status differences and permit interaction between teachers and administrators
5. depend less on outsiders and more upon insiders for substantive and procedural guidance

Basing his views on his research, Griffin believed that in order for meaningful change to take place, a particular pro-

cess of problem-solving--which he named DDAE for dialogue, decision-making, action, and evaluation--is essential. He concluded that the work of school staffs can be accomplished more effectively with internal resources than had previously been thought.

Bierly and Berliner (1982) strongly maintained that teachers can effect a remedy and that the increased pressure for staff development programs stems from a desire on the part of teachers to do their jobs better. After reviewing existing staff development evaluation reports and anecdotal reports by providers, these authors specified the following factors to be central to a program's effectiveness:

1. Practicality and concreteness in instruction
2. Individualization of instruction to accommodate participants' professional needs and learning styles
3. Extensive time for practicing what was learned
4. Adaptation of instruction to teachers' own classroom situations
5. Coaching in the classroom by observers who provide feedback
6. On-site team involvement
7. Instructors who were or are teachers themselves

Thus, consideration of teachers' unique needs in the planning and implementation of staff development programs was found to enhance the program's effectiveness and to lead to a higher level of teacher competence.

In describing a research-based inservice model, Mailman, Kierstead, and Gundlach (1982) showed that a supportive small group atmosphere allows teachers to hash out their philosophical differences, enables teachers to share their problems, solutions, and expertise and gives teachers a way to become aware of and consider the effects of their teaching on students. These authors, too, stressed the importance of long-term training efforts, suggesting follow-up workshops one week apart where teachers may share their experiences as they try out techniques in their classrooms, as well as coaching and peer observation.

Taking a somewhat different approach, Vacca (1983) focused on the staff development leader rather than on the staff development program in an attempt to determine what distinguished effective from ineffective staff developers. Her study looked at how over 500 content area teachers perceived their staff development leaders. From this data Vacca developed four categories of staff developer behavior:

1. Content delivery--the leader's technique for involvement or participation
2. Personal influence--one's personal traits or characteristics, actions, or responses to situations
3. Professional competence--one's background knowledge, preparation, organization, proficiency or clarity of directions, and adherence to the task
4. Arrangements--the assessment of needs and the mechanics of the presentation

Vacca concluded that regardless of the subject of a staff development program, teachers responded favorably to competent delivery.

In reading and analyzing the literature, certain patterns became evident, patterns which suggested approaches and strategies for this writer to use as a framework in designing a solution to the problem facing the prekindergarten team. One central theme that the literature agreed upon was the potential good that could be derived from a well-planned and presented staff development program. The most frequently suggested training tool was the inservice workshop. Common practices identified what happened before, during, and after the planning and training and emphasized the need for readiness on the part of the staff, careful planning, competent delivery of the training, and support during the implementation.

Chapter III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Statement of General Goals

The primary goal of this practicum was to increase prekindergarten teachers' skills as well as their personal feelings of competence and confidence in the interest centers planned by other teachers. Teachers were to acquire a better understanding of the philosophy, goals and objectives, scope and sequence of activities, available resources, and appropriate grouping arrangements for individualized instruction in each center.

Secondary goals were to satisfy parents volunteering regularly in the classrooms that their children were being taught by teachers who were highly skilled, competent, and confident in each of the program's four interest centers; and to decrease the frequency of interruptions during the school day regarding questions and problems resulting from the use of one another's lesson plans.

Terminal Performance Objectives

The specific objectives considered evidence of having met the general goals of the practicum were projected as follows:

1. All four prekindergarten teachers will indicate increased feelings of competence and confidence

when working in each of the four interest centers as evidenced by a 75% response rate of 4 or 5 (good or mastery level) on the post-questionnaire (Appendix A).

2. Teachers will attest to feelings of competence in answering any and all parent questions in regard to the total prekindergarten curriculum during the end-of-the-year parent-teacher conferences held in May, 1984, as evidenced by an average response of 4.5 to question 19 on the post-questionnaire (Appendix A) as well as by personal testimony during follow-up meetings.

3. Reports to the Lower School Director regarding discrepancies in the skills of teachers in the various prekindergarten interest centers will cease.

4. Planning teachers will report 50% fewer questions from non-planning teachers as measured by actual documentation of the frequency of such questions after the implementation compared with estimates of frequency of such questions before the implementation (Appendix C).

5. At the completion of each workshop, all participants will indicate their satisfaction by circling strongly agree or agree for 75% of the items on the Evaluation Form for Inservice Workshops (Appendix E).

Description of Evaluation Instruments

To obtain information measuring the success of this practicum, the following evaluation instruments were to be used:

1. A pre/post Likert-type questionnaire constructed by this writer was to be administered to the four prekindergarten teachers in February and again in June (Appendix A). The questionnaire specified 19 various abilities and skills and contained open-ended questions as well. Teachers were to

be asked to indicate their feelings of competence and confidence both in the area of their own planning and in the other 3 areas planned by teammates.

2. Successful conferencing with parents could be evidenced by scores of 4 or 5 (good or mastery level) on question 19 on the post-questionnaire (Appendix A), in addition to the teachers' testimony.

3. An interview with the Director of Lower School would be the tool by which reports of dissatisfaction among prekindergarten parents were obtained.

4. Prekindergarten teachers were to complete a form (Appendix C) asking them to estimate the frequency of questions directed both to them from other teachers and from them to other teachers.

   They were to document such questions as they occurred during implementation.

5. A workshop evaluation form was to be administered at the completion of each of the four workshops. Constructed by this writer, the form was designed to determine whether the information presented was of value to the participants in increasing their understanding of and their skills relevant to the particular interest center that was presented (Appendix E).

Chapter IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Possible Alternative Solutions

The most obvious solution to the problem presented in this practicum would have been semi- or complete departmentalization of the prekindergarten as is the case in many team teaching situations. In this structure, each teacher remains in her area of specialization, teaching daily lessons to all four classes. This approach, in fact, was used for several years in the University School prekindergarten, but disadvantages inherent in this method caused it to be abandoned. Although most children appeared to adjust readily to the personalities and methods of the various teachers, for others this adjustment proved difficult. Furthermore, it was feared that this method could narrow the teaching task to the point of risking the loss of an integrated program for the child. Therefore, the school would not consider a return to a departmentalized prekindergarten.

Another possible solution involved using the physical space in a more traditional manner by setting up four self-contained classrooms and having each teacher plan and carry out the total program for her class. This arrangement, however, was both impractical and impossible as it would necessitate major structural changes and duplication of material and human resources. Moreover, the University

School's programs are promoted as being organized into interest centers, and many prekindergarten parents chose the school for their children on that basis.

Other solutions which were considered and found to be of limited or no use included the following:

1. Pooling resource materials and other sources of specialized information (books and articles relating to theory, goals, methods, adtivities, and games)

   This solution had been tried and found to be ineffective due to lack of time to productively read and interpret and effectively utilize such material.

2. Writing more detailed, specific, comprehensive lesson plans

   This solution had been tried and found to be helpful to an extent, but the inclusion of too many specifics became burdensome. Reading such plans ahead of time proved meaningless and reading detailed plans "on the spot" and effectively assimilating the ideas while children waited was impossible as well as poor practice.

3. Observing each other work in her area of specialization, a practice highly recommended in the literature

   This approach was largely impractical in this writer's work setting due to staff and time limitations.

4. Meeting every day after school to go over each teacher's plans for the following day.

   This procedure was necessary to an extent and feasible to an extent; however, after school time was often taken up by weekly department meetings, weekly team meetings, parent-teacher conferences, housekeeping details, and other tasks.

At this point, a solution strategy which would incorporate and expand upon the best elements of the preceding alternative solutions seemed desirable.

Solution Selected

A recurring theme of the literature was that positive change can result from a well-conceived staff development program, particularly one that is participatory and designed by persons directly related to the problem. Keeping this factor in mind, this writer met with the Lower School Director to explore the various solution strategies in an effort to determine the best solution to the problem. It was agreed that the best strategy was to develop a series of workshops to begin during the University School's mid-winter inservice time with bi-monthly meetings for the remainder of the school year. Due to the nature of the problem, it was necessary that all four prekindergarten teachers become involved in planning and presenting the workshops.

Having received the Director's permission to proceed, this writer set up a framework for the teacher training program, incorporating the following elements as part of the implementation:

1. An initial meeting of the prekindergarten staff during which each team member would be asked to develop a workshop in her area of specialization, basing the content on needs as identified on the pre-questionnaire (Appendix A) previously administered to the

team as documentation of the problem. Leadership would be provided by this writer.

2. Preparation and presentation of four workshops, focusing on the planning teacher's philosophy and goals for the year, including an indication of the monthly sequence of content and/or skills. In addition, a piece of curriculum could be isolated and used to demonstrate the interrelationship of objectives, individualized activities, resources and materials, and grouping procedures. It was hoped that by organizing workshops around the topics of objectives, activities, resources, and grouping--the headings used in the teachers' daily plan books--more cogent and meaningful lesson planning would result, thus reducing the need for after school meetings to discuss plans.

3. Bi-monthly team meetings following the workshop presentations for the purpose of discussing current plans in each area and dealing with any difficulties or frustrations teachers may be experiencing. These follow-up meetings would perpetuate the exchange of ideas begun during the inservice workshops.

In designing the solution, this writer considered the following factors in regard to the staff members:

1. They varied significantly in age, educational background, teaching experience, self-direction, and interests.

2. Most had heavy commitments outside of school and operated on tight time schedules.

3. Although all were concerned about the practicum problem, their levels of personal and professional motivation to solve it varied.

Also taken into account were facts from the staff development literature (Wood & Thompson, 1980; Vacca, 1983) which have been substantiated by research:

1. Adults want to be the origins of their own learning--involved in the selection of objectives, content, activities, and assessment in inservice education.

2. Adults will commit to learning something when the goals and objectives of the inservice are considered realistic and important to the learner.

3. Adults will learn, retain, and use what they perceive as relevant to their personal and professional needs.

4. Learning a new skill, technique, or concept may promote a positive or negative view of self; fear of external judgment produces anxiety during new learning situations.

5. Adults respond favorably to competent delivery; presenters must be knowledgeable, enthusiastic, and respect participants' experiences.

A calendar plan was established which described the writer's plan for the development and implementation of an inservice training program for prekindergarten teachers (Appendix F).

Report of Action Taken

In mid-February, 1984, copies of the practicum proposal outline and the evaluation instruments were submitted to the Director of Lower School for approval to implement. She reviewed the materials and enthusiastically supported its implementation.

On February 15, 1984, this writer met with the other three prekindergarten teachers to discuss the dimensions of the problem and the proposed solution. The agenda for the

meeting was as follows:

1. Share results of pre-questionnaire
2. Present solution strategy
3. Share calendar of events
4. Discuss workshop preparation and presentation

Copies of the graph depicting results of the pre-questionnaire (Appendix D) were distributed and studied with keen interest and genuine concern. The data revealed the extent of the problem and pointed to specific areas of weakness. The teachers, concurring with the results, shared their feelings of inadequacy and frustration. Happily, the team members took a personal interest in minimizing the discrepancies in their skill levels. Since this practicum demanded not only their cooperation but also their active participation, this interest provided an auspicious beginning.

The solution stragegy was then presented in detail as well as the calendar plan for action. As anticipated, some dismay was apparent as team members began to realize the additional demands to be made on their time and energies. This writer empathized with their feelings and offered her continuing help and guidance as necessary. Then, to allow participants some control in the "what" and "how" of their learning (Wood & Thompson, 1980), their input regarding workshop content and activities was enlisted.

Team members accepted the proposed workshop format as outlined in the calendar plan (Appendix F), agreeing that it included all major aspects of prekindergarten curriculum planning. It was decided that each presenter would isolate specific short term objectives, demonstrating how activities might be used to meet these objectives and how such activities can be altered to meet varying ability and interest levels of individual children. Additional resources available in the classroom for use in designing activities to meet objectives would also be introduced. Finally, it was decided that each presenter would clarify options for grouping children in order to maximize individualization of instruction.

One team member suggested that as part of the follow-up activities, a schedule be set up so that coaching in the classroom could take place. That is, nonplanning teachers would be scheduled to work with planning teachers in their areas of specialty, using teacher aides as substitute personnel. It was decided that such a schedule would be attempted.

It was then pointed out that the calendar plan was unrealistic. It was agreed that four workshops during the three February inservice days involved too much material to prepare and assimilate. Thus the schedule was revised so that only one area (this writer's--the language area) would be presented during that time. Team members felt that the

first workshop could serve as a model and that subsequent presenters could build on its strengths and minimize its weaknesses. The other three workshops were rescheduled at one-week intervals after school on Thursdays. Participants signed up for their time slots.

Since the new schedule would shorten the time available for follow-up meetings, such meetings were rescheduled to occur during the week following each presentation--either as part of the regularly scheduled weekly team meetings or on a separate day if more time was required. This change in plan proved to be most beneficial and probably superior to the original plan.

Some apprehension was expressed regarding the Evaluation Form for Inservice Workshops (Appendix E). This writer assured those concerned that the purpose of the form was to determine the value of the workshop series to the participants and which elements were of most/least value--not to evaluate the presenters. It was agreed, however, that forms would be held in confidence and that results would be tabulated for the series as a whole only, rather than for each workshop. Teachers then agreed to comply and admitted that they could appreciate the need for such an instrument.

To conclude the meeting, this writer distributed copies of journal articles concerning staff development and discussed portions which offered suggestions relevant to planning workshops (Appendix G). Teachers volunteered to make

their own resource books available to one another.

Between February 15 and February 21, this writer developed the language arts interest center (Play and Communicate) workshop. It soon became apparent that there was too much material to cover in one session. A decision was made to divide it into two parts--a reading component and a writing component--to be presented in separate workshops.

In planning the specifics of the workshop, suggestions from the literature proved useful in assuring that content be concrete, practical, and relevant to individual teacher's needs and that interest be sustained by delivery that elicited involvement and participation. The workshop as planned involved use of the various modalities in providing a maximum learning experience. Copies were made of exceptional articles to share with participants during the workshop itself and/or to distribute as handouts.

On February 21, during the University School's inservice time, the reading component of the Play and Communicate Workshop was presented. An agenda (Appendix H) was distributed to serve as a guideline during the workshop. This writer's personal philosophy was explained and substantiated as appropriate with citations from the literature. Since a persistent question during the year had been "How do I know when a child is ready to read?," the topic of readiness was explored in depth from the viewpoints of several experts in the field as well as from the writer's own exper-

iences and observations. Questions were asked and answered as they arose.

Classroom materials had been gathered and set out previously to be used as necessary to clarify or illustrate theoretical material. Lessons were simulated using the participants to demonstrate uses of the materials for various purposes and/or for varying ability levels. The scope and sequence for the year was explained. Major goals were broken down into a hierarchic arrangement of skills to enable teachers to determine at what point in the curriculum to begin with individual children. Other facets of the language program (e.g., Sound-of-the-Week, day books, Show and Tell, Language Lab) were examined as to their place in the total scheme.

The importance of specifying clear objectives, activities, resources, and grouping procedures was explored by studying this writer's plan book. It was strongly emphasized that the starting point in planning and the reason for carrying out the activity is the daily objective, since team members tended to be negligent in listing objectives.

Attention was drawn throughout the workshop to an assortment of supplementary resources (those usually stored in the closet). Teachers were invited to look through them as the presenter explained their purposes and demonstrated methods and techniques in response to questions.

Two journal articles pertaining to writing readiness were distributed to each participant in preparation for Part II of the Play and Communicate Workshop. Since it was essential that they be read carefully prior to the next day's session, participants were asked to highlight portions they found most interesting and to be prepared to share these highlights during the workshop.

On February 22 the writing component of the Play and Communicate Workshop took place. This being the last of the inservice days, teachers had other activities to complete, so an attempt was made to keep this workshop as short as possible. The agenda (Appendix I) as distributed to the participants outlined the two articles handed out the previous day and thus kept the discussion focused and moving forward. Much of the material was new to the participants, however, and considerable discussion ensued. Agreement was eventually reached on issues such as when and how to correct an improper grasp, proper letter formation, and techniques for working with left-handers. It was agreed that the discussion had been worthwhile and the time well spent.

Since it is customary during the mid-winter break to set out new shelf activities, the remainder of this workshop was used to demonstrate the many new pre-writing and writing activities that had been developed by this writer and to show how they related to the theoretical material already covered. An unanticipated result of this segment was the

spontaneous realization by participants that they could design similar activities for use in their own content areas, thereby reinforcing these essential skills throughout the total program.

At the completion of the writing workshop an evaluation form (Appendix E) covering both parts of the Play and Communicate Workshop was filled out by each of the three participants. Results from this form were later combined with those from subsequent workshops and are discussed in Chapter V. Comments written at the end of the evaluation indicated that the participants had found the information conveyed to be of immediate use to them in their day-to-day work with their classes. The explanation of reading readiness and related skills, the list of prerequisite skills for writing, and the demonstration of activities, as well as the handouts, were said to be of particular value.

From February 27 through March 3, the week following the workshop, participants had opportunities to put into practice new understandings and techniques from the sessions. Follow-up meetings occurred spontaneously as teachers were eager to share their experiences. They reported feeling more confident in matching the levels of activities to the abilities and interests of individual children due largely to their increased knowledge of prerequisite skills. One teacher commented that her understanding of "readiness" allowed her to feel less compelled to push less advanced

children forward, a result that the group considered as positive. Minor problems relating to the use of certain new pre-writing activities were identified and solutions were worked out through modifications or elimination of those activities. Participants expressed pleasure not only in regard to the workshop content, but also in the less tangible area of team unity and support. That is, teachers felt more comfortable in admitting to and communicating problems, seeking solutions, and questioning the approaches of teammates--a feeling that increased as the sessions continued.

Also during this time teachers began preparing their own workshops--thinking, researching and reading when necessary, organizing their thoughts and materials, and planning the methods of their actual presentations. Though this writer remained available to answer questions, guide format, suggest resources, and offer support, presenters were largely self-directed.

Due to unforeseen and uncontrollable circumstances--mainly teacher absences due to illness and conflicting meetings--the workshop schedule was again modified so that sessions occurred every two weeks.

After school on March 8 the second workshop--Play and Imagine--took place. The emphasis in this area is affective and activities center on socialization and imaginative play, areas traditional in early childhood education and thus ones

in which the staff considered their training to have been extensive and, therefore, sufficient. However, as the presenter proceeded through her agenda (Appendix J), discussion revealed that, as in the more academic areas of reading and writing, different viewpoints and approaches existed among staff members. A lively discussion ensued regarding issues such as:

1. How much time should be spent in free play as opposed to planned units?
2. When doing a planned unit, how best can material be presented in a meaningful way?
3. How can experiential learning be maximized?
4. How contrived (structured/unstructured) should dramatic play experiences be?
5. When children are given free choice, what types of play (symbolic, practice games, social games, games of construction) are evident?

   Should a child who prefers one type to the exclusion of others be encouraged to expand his or her repertoire?
6. If so, how? How intrusive should the teacher be?

Essentially, teachers agreed that time for free play must be sufficient so that previous play bits may be incorporated into extended play sequences. Experiential activities are most age appropriate and through pantomime and role playing, children work through who and what they are. Planned units help children turn their interests outward

and develop a growing sense of their environment and, in turn, enrich their dramatic play. If certain children need some form of encouragement, the teacher can assist by observing and facilitating play, but she should avoid becoming overly involved once the play has begun. Props, puppets, and flexible materials such as blocks can stimulate and enhance creative play. It was concluded that the teacher's own philosophy, attitudes, and personality would in many cases determine how to use and adapt activities and plans to her particular group.

Teachers felt it unnecessary for the presenter to demonstrate shelf activities and games in this area. However, she did distribute and go over handouts which contained many ideas for expressing feelings and attitudes, dramatizing stories, developing sensory awareness, concentration, movement, and speech--ideas which teachers found most useful.

On March 22 after school the third workshop of the series was presented, the Play and Learn Workshop. This interest center focuses on pre-math concepts and problem-solving. As is apparent from the presenter's agenda (Appendix K), the theoretical framework is primarily Piagetian. Piaget's approach is child-centered and, since manipulation of materials is crucial, it requires an "active" classroom. Piaget envisioned the teacher's role as facilitating chil-

dren's discovery of logical knowledge through indirect teaching methods. Children are seen as naturally curious and eager to interact readily with the materials and people around them. They explore, make and test predictions, improve and restructure ideas through their interaction with the environment. Participating teachers appeared to understand and accept this material.

However, as the presenter discussed the concept of equilibration and the factors which limit the preoperational child from reasoning and thinking logically (egocentrism, centration, irreversibility, transductive reasoning, inability to conserve), participants exhibited a lack of knowledge and understanding. Confusion and disagreement arose concerning the topics of "setting the foundation," "teaching strategy" derived from Piagetian theory, and Jerome Bruner's "guided discovery learning" (refer to agenda, Appendix K).

Different methods of teaching, concepts of the teacher's role, and levels of flexibility became evident. Demonstrating, stating rules, and reinforcing specific concepts--in other words, direct teaching methods--were in actuality the techniques being used in the classroom. Certain staff members were uncomfortable accepting all responses, feeling their purpose was to eliminate errors; others could accept errors as necessary steps toward a higher level of understanding and argued that to correct

them was imposing adult expectations of correctness on children prematurely.

The conflicting views, as this writer recognized later after researching the problem, closely reflected an opposing framework--the more traditional behaviorist position, in which teaching by telling is an accepted method. In this approach correct answers are reinforced while wrong answers are not accepted. The locus of evaluation is external; that is, the correct answer is only in the teacher's head or in the textbook. Thus, according to Labinowicz (1980), the procedure promotes extrinsic motivation and stresses memorization. All these factors are in direct contrast to elements inherent in the theory of Piaget.

When the presenter discussed the aims of an early childhood math program (agenda, point F, Appendix K), another issue arose and discussion took place concerning children's readiness for numerical operations. Subsequent research in this area (Labinowicz, 1980; Baretta-Lorton, 1977) revealed a similar dichotomy. "Piagetians" appreciate that concepts are developed slowly and favor gradual development. They believe that the more experience a child has with physical objects at each given stage, the more likely that related understandings will develop and serve as the foundation for successive stages. They feel that "behaviorists" are too quick to point out inconsistencies in the children's thinking and push children into numer-

ical operations without giving them a solid, extensive foundation.

Since time had run out, the presenter quickly demonstrated an activity or two and the participants completed the rating section of the workshop evaluation form, agreeing to return their written comments the next day.

During the following week, March 26 to 30, discussion continued regarding teaching methodology in the Play and Learn area. Teachers were intrigued by the implications the Piagetian theory had for their everyday work in the classroom. Teachers unschooled in the theory realized that implementation of the method required considerable knowledge and skill and sensitivity to the children's spontaneous procedures and reactions. They surmised that, in comparison to traditional methods, this active approach was difficult.

All participants indicated a desire or need to have the planning teacher work alongside them in the classroom. They were uncertain as to how to accurately assess children's present level of understanding and how to select and use materials to set up problem-solving activities that actively involved children at the appropriate level of difficulty. A procedure was worked out so that "peer coaching" could be tried on a limited basis. However, adherence to the schedule proved impossible due to a shortage of personnel to cover the planning teacher's class and time limit-

ations due to frequent rehearsals for the prekindergarten spring production. The planning teacher minimized problems by demonstrating methods and activities as necessary after school, preparing clear plans, and carefully selecting and setting out materials for others to use.

On April 5 the final workshop of the series took place after school. The curriculum for the Play and Discover interest center includes both the science and art activities. After passing out an outline of the workshop (Appendix L), the presenting teacher began by discussing her personal philosophy. She then explained two factors she valued in the classroom environment--"modeling" appropriate or desirable behaviors as a teaching tool and providing emotional support and love as a means of building self-esteem.

She then divided the remainder of her presentation into two parts: Teaching Science and Teaching Art. After suggesting methods for individualizing a science program, she focused on the subject of preparedness. Frequently, team members had lacked understanding of the concepts involved in scientific experiments and tasks and therefore were hindered in presenting the day's lesson. Again, this proved to be an area where team members' background experience varied, affecting both their interest levels and their preferred teaching techniques.

To minimize this problem it was suggested that the planning teacher would acquaint others with the scientific

concept and procedure of the experiment prior to their class times. One teacher preferred this explanation to be given orally before school on the day of the experiment. Another wanted the information written in detail in the plan book. The third participant had no preference. The group resolved that the best idea was to gather the team for an explanation before school since at that time equipment would be set up and available for demonstration if necessary.

The teaching of art segment went quickly since all teachers possessed considerable experience and expertise in this area. Teachers suggested having a greater variety of art media available to children on a daily basis, and methods of accomplishing this goal were discussed. The evaluation form was completed by participating teachers.

Following the school's spring break, parent-teacher conferences were scheduled after school, eliminating time for separate workshop follow-up sessions. Therefore, during the regularly scheduled weekly team meetings, lesson plans for the following week were previewed when necessary and successful methods and other ideas were shared. In this way specific problems were dealt with and material presented in workshops was reinforced.

During the final wrap-up session held the last week in May, workshop participants agreed that, in addition to fulfilling the established goals of this practicum, secondary gains had been realized. Team unity, mutual support, col-

laborative efforts, and camaraderie had been strengthened. During the implementation, team members had gotten to know one another better, were more aware of the benefits of each other's methodologies and preferences, and were more comfortable discussing sensitive issues with one another. Some surprise had been evident earlier as individuals began to perceive the similarities in their basic philosophies and goals, as translated into their interest center planning. In essence, all were caring and professional teachers who believed in providing active involvement, experience-based learning, and individualization through careful curriculum planning and organization and systematic management of the learning environment.

In June the post-questionnaire was completed by participating teachers. An analysis of results is presented in Chapter V.

Chapter V

RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Presentation and Analysis of Results

The goal of this practicum was to increase prekindergarten teachers' skills as well as their personal feelings of competence and confidence as they worked in interest centers planned by other teachers. To accomplish this goal a series of inservice workshops--developed and presented by members of the prekindergarten team under the leadership of this writer--was set up and implemented.

Five objectives were established to accomplish this goal:

Objective 1: All four kindergarten teachers will indicate increased feelings of competence and confidence when working in interest centers planned by teammates, as evidenced by a 75% response rate of 4 or 5 (good or mastery level) on the post-questionnaire (Appendix M).

This objective was not met. Out of the 19 items on the questionnaire, teachers responded with a 4 or 5 as indicated below:

Table 1

Results of the Post-Questionnaire

Teacher	Number of 4 or 5 Responses	% of 19
A	14	74%
B	17	89%
C	4	21%
D	14	74%

Although the objective was not met as stated, when post-questionnaire scores were compared with pre-questionnaire scores, it became evident that growth had occurred as follows:

Table 2

Growth as Indicated by Pre- and Post-Questionnaire Scores

Teacher	Number of 4 or 5 Responses		% Growth Rate
	Pre	Post	
A	8	14	32%
B	6	17	58%
C	3	4	5%
D	4	14	53%

Following administration of the post-questionnaire, this writer interviewed participants to determine what factors they felt contributed to their growth. Those exhibiting significant growth attributed it largely to the workshop

series, the follow-up sessions, and the resulting improved lines of communication among team members. However, they agreed that some growth may have occurred naturally as they became increasingly familiar with the interests and needs of individual children, the materials, and the system itself through their day-to-day performance of job responsibilities.

An interview with the participant showing little growth revealed that her heightened awareness of all that is involved in planning and implementing each daily lesson (i.e., stating objectives, designing activities, selecting appropriate resources and materials, grouping so as to meet individual needs) in each interest center made her more aware of her own areas of weakness. Thus, a number of her post-responses were lower than her pre-responses. Although this writer had not anticipated such a result, in retrospect it was understandable, particularly when--as in this case--the team member lacked course work in early childhood education. The needs of such an individual were clearly beyond the scope of this workshop series.

All participants expressed regret that the planned coaching by peers in the classroom had proven to be not feasible and strongly urged that it be made a priority in future inservice training programs. The need for more practice time in the classrooms before moving on to new activities was also noted.

Another result which was originally unanticipated but became increasingly evident as teachers prepared their workshops was the significant rate of growth revealed by the post-questionnaire in the levels of teachers' competence/confidence in their own interest centers. When interviewed regarding this result, teachers commented that the process of developing and presenting such workshops caused them to "focus on my own area in a new way," "do research which provided me with new understandings and ideas," "articulate for the first time my personal philosophy," and "think through my daily objectives."

Thus, despite the strengthening of teachers' skills in interest centers planned by teammates, discrepancies continued to exist as teachers consistently rated their performance as superior in the interest centers for which they planned. Participating teachers concluded that the effort required by the act of planning daily objectives and developing or selecting activities and materials gave them an advantage in teaching the lesson.

Additional analyses of the pre/post-questionnaire data may be found in Appendix N. Graphs are included to depict the following information:

1. Pre-questionnaire comparison of teachers' competence/confidence (duplicate of Appendix D).
2. Post-questionnaire comparison of teachers' competence/confidence
3. Pre/post questionnaire comparison of teachers'

competence/confidence in <u>other</u> interest centers

4. Pre/post-questionnaire comparison of teachers' competence/confidence in <u>own</u> interest centers

5. Pre/post-questionnaire of teachers' competence/confidence in <u>both</u> their own and other interest centers

<u>Objective 2</u>: Teachers will attest to feelings of competence/confidence in answering any and all parent questions in regard to the total prekindergarten curriculum during the end-of-the-year parent-teacher conferences held in May, 1984, as evidenced by an average response of 4.5 to question 19 on the post questionnaire as well as by personal testimony during follow-up meetings.

This objective was not met. The mean response of prekindergarten teachers to question 19 on the post-questionnaire was 4.0. However, this response was in contrast to testimony in follow-up meetings where each teacher expressed that she <u>was</u> able to answer all questions from parents regarding the progress of children in skill areas related to any of the interest centers. One teacher had mentioned that although she was able to discuss children's achievement in the academic areas and to answer parents' questions, she still felt ill-at-ease in doing so.

<u>Objective 3</u>: Reports to the Lower School Director regarding discrepancies in the skill levels of teachers in

the various prekindergarten interest centers will cease.

This objective was met. The Lower School Director reported no new instances of parental dissatisfaction.

Objective 4: Planning teachers will report 50% fewer questions from non-planning teachers as measured by actual documentation of the frequency of such questions after the implementation compared with estimates of frequency of such questions before the implementation.

The achievement of this objective remains questionable for two reasons:

1. The phrase "questions/problems" was found to be too nebulous. Attempts to articulate the idea in more measurable terms were unsuccessful. Team members felt that the effort involved was more bothersome than the original problem had been.

2. Documenting "questions/problems" as they occurred was inconvenient and they tended to be forgotten as the day or week progressed.

Nonetheless, the opinion of the team was that this objective had been met. Questions of an interruptive nature stopped altogether following the workshop presentations. Nonplanning teachers, realizing the intent of lessons in the various interest centers, were able to solve minor problems and inconveniences on their own and to carry out the day's activity. More significant problems were

aired and resolved in follow-up meetings.

Questions were felt to have actually increased after the workshop series. This factor was viewed positively, however, as questions reflected a sincere desire to learn and to improve one's skills.

Objective 5: At the completion of each workshop all participants will indicate their satisfaction by circling strongly agree or agree for 75% of the items on the Evaluation Form for Inservice Workshops (Appendix E).

As previously agreed, results were tabulated for the series as a whole only rather than separately for each workshop.

This objective was met. Out of a total possible 120 responses, the "uncertain" response was indicated only 7 times and disagreement was never indicated. Thus a participant satisfaction rate of 94 percent was realized. The results of workshop evaluation forms can be summarized as follows:

Table 3

Summary of Results from Workshop Evaluation Forms

	Question	Strongly Agree or Agree	Uncertain	Disagree or Strongly Disagree	Mean Score
1.	The workshop overall contained information that was useful to me.	12	0	0	4.7
2.	The workshop was well-organized.	12	0	0	4.8
3.	The presenter was well-prepared.	12	0	0	4.8
4.	The instruction in this workshop was interesting and held my attention.	12	0	0	4.5
5.	The length of this workshop was appropriate.	11	1	0	4.4
6.	This workshop brought new ideas to my attention.	12	0	0	4.7
7.	The workshop provided me with useful materials and techniques.	11	1	0	4.4
8.	The workshop provided involvement and participation.	9	3	0	3.8
9.	The presenter was able to answer my questions.	11	1	0	4.7
10.	The workshop brought useful articles and/or books to my attention.	11	1	0	4.3

As indicated in Table 3 several "uncertain" responses pertained either to length or to participation/involvement. Two workshops did run longer than scheduled. In cases where presenters felt it important to present theoretical material, the lecture method predominated, thereby reducing participation.

Each of the workshops was well received by the participating teachers. Following completion of the agenda, teachers tended to remain to continue discussion. A feeling expressed repeatedly by all was how helpful such sessions would have been if held during August--particularly for new staff members. Although each teacher is given considerable autonomy in planning her interest center, it was felt that learning in this way about the other centers would facilitate a beginning teacher's adjustment to the school's unique structure.

Conclusions

Overall the evidence indicates that the implementation of the prekindergarten inservice workshops designed to improve teacher performance and confidence in interest centers planned by teammates brought positive results. In three out of four cases, self-evaluation by teachers revealed significant growth in feelings of competence and confidence as they worked in interest centers planned by other teachers. The data suggested similar growth in regard

to the interest centers the teachers planned themselves. Teachers perceived the workshops as valuable and felt that information conveyed through these and follow-up sessions decreased the number of interruptions to ask questions during the school day. An additional positive benefit was the strengthening of lines of communication, as teachers began to feel at ease expressing concerns not previously voiced.

Implications are evident as follows:

1. Teachers are interested in fine-tuning their skills and will commit time and effort to learning when the goals and objectives are perceived as job-related and immediately useful.

2. Inservice training of the type practiced here can positively affect the performance of teachers, resulting in improved instruction for learners. Teachers participating in this practicum demonstrated an ability to learn and use new teaching strategies, integrating them into their personal styles, and combining them with others in their repertoires.

3. A secondary benefit of in-group meetings of this type is to open lines of communication between team members. Participating teachers found it increasingly comfortable to question one another regarding daily lesson plans, to assert their differing philosophies, to describe their preferred methods, and to deal with other sensitive issues.

4. Understandings and techniques gained in one content area "spill over" and become integrated with those of other content areas, thereby strengthening the total program.

It is this writer's conclusion that the training series provided a productive and rewarding experience for all pre-

kindergarten teachers. Moreover, their cooperation, collaboration, and involvement in planning workshop activities and their active participation in presenting material were vital to the successful implementation of this practicum.

Recommendations for Replicating the Program

This writer would make the following recommendations to anyone wishing to replicate this program:

1. Whenever possible, arrange released time so that workshop sessions may be held during the staff's workday. After school has proved to be a poor time and previously scheduled inservice time is often tightly scheduled and doesn't permit the inclusion of such workshops.

2. Begin workshops early in the school year so that follow-up sessions are available immediately as a forum for discussion and serve as the basis of an on-going staff development program.

3. Consider asking returning teachers to present workshops prior to the beginning of the school year. In that way teachers new to the system can receive a solid introduction to the interest center structure, develop a sensitivity to the school's philosophy of instruction, and experience a model for planning their own interest centers. Beginning teachers can present workshops related to their interest centers somewhat later in the school year.

4. If necessary material to be covered may be divided into segments so that meetings are shorter in duration, albeit more frequent. One possible division is as follows:

   Part I--Orientation to a particular interest center
   Philosophy, goals, and objectives
   Scope and sequence

Part II--Implementating within a particular interest center
Activities, materials, resources
Alternate grouping procedures
Writing of lesson plans

5. Expand or in other ways modify the series to reflect in-house needs and interests. For example, this writer found that the elements of scope and sequence were largely avoided in participant's presentations, indicating perhaps that teachers lack long-range planning skills. This possibility should be explored and if found to be an actual weakness, a separate workshop can be designed to provide necessary information and guidance.

6. To assist participants in adhering to the format they agreed upon during the planning stage, a guideline sheet may be developed and copies distributed prior to preparing presentations.

7. To increase teachers' participation during meetings, have journal articles and other handouts available prior to the scheduled workshops. Insure that they will be read by suggesting that participants will be asked to share highlights with one another.

8. If desired, a more accurate and objective evaluation of an increase or decrease in the number of questions teachers have regarding daily lesson plans can be obtained by recording such questions on a sheet of paper kept in each teacher's plan book.

Dissemination

A copy of this practicum report has been given to the Director of the Lower School of the University School for her information and use with new teachers. A copy remains in the prekindergarten building for review by the staff. Letters to which copies of the abstract of this practicum

were attached, have been sent to the Headmaster of the Davie campus of the University School and to the Director of the Coral Springs campus (Appendix O). Plans have been made to compile in booklet form the practicum abstract, the four workshop agenda along with the handouts that were distributed during the series, and a workshop bibliography. These booklets will be given to new prekindergarten staff members in August of 1984 and will be used as the basis of staff orientation to the interest centers.

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APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE:
SURVEY OF COMPETENCE/CONFIDENCE

QUESTIONNAIRE

Survey of Competence/Confidence

It has been pointed out by observers of the prekindergarten program that there appears to be a discrepancy in the skills of the teachers as they travel from one interest center to the next with their classes. Primarily, it is felt that each teacher is more competent/confident in the area for which she plans.

A series of workshops to strengthen prekindergarten teachers' skills in all areas is being planned and will take place during the February in-service time. In order that these workshops be most relevant and productive, please rate your level of competence/confidence during the first half of the 1983-84 school year in (1) the interest center for which you plan and (2) the 3 interest centers planned by teammates, according to the following scale:

1 -- minimal competence/confidence
2 -- limited competence/confidence
3 -- satisfactory competence/confidence
4 -- good competence/confidence
5 -- mastery level competence/confidence

	own interest center	other interest centers
1. I am aware of the school's philosophy, long-range goals, and behavioral objectives as set forth in the "Lower School Curriculum" for the given subject area.		
2. I am aware of the planning teacher's interpretation of the above philosophy, goals, and objectives for the given subject areas.		
3. I understand the planning teacher's conceptualization of the scope and sequence of each subject area.		
4. I am able to formally/informally assess the entry level knowledge or skills appropriate to each subject area.		

	own interest center	other interest centers
5. I am cognizant of each of my home-base student's present strengths and weaknesses relative to each subject area.		
6. I am able to develop a system for keeping records of class and individual student progress.		
7. I understand the purposes of the various shelf activities in the interest centers.		
8. I understand how to select and adapt them to varying ability/interest levels.		
9. I am aware of related learning activities and resources.		
10. I understand the uses of the related learning activities and resources.		
11. I understand how daily objectives as set forth in lesson plans relate to long-term goals.		
12. I can present directions and implement instructional activities as suggested in daily lesson plans.		
13. I can adapt activities in daily lesson plans to meet the instructional needs of individual children.		
14. I am able to select from supplementary resources to meet daily objectives when necessary.		
15. I am able to appropriately group children as suggested in daily lesson plans so as to personalize/individualize instruction.		
16. I am able to complete the activities in the time and sequence that was defined.		

own interest center	other interest centers

17. I am able to evaluate the effectiveness of daily activities in meeting objectives for children.

18. I am able to integrate activities of one interest center with activities in other interest centers when appropriate.

19. I am able to respond competently to specific questions from parents regarding the progress of their child in skill areas related to the interest center.

20. After reflecting upon your experience as a planner/team member/teacher during the first half of the current school year, list specific needs and concerns you have and what specific information, instruction, etc., you feel you will need to maximize your feelings of competence/confidence in any of the four interest centers of the prekindergarten:

a.

b.

c.

d.

e.

f.

g.

APPENDIX B

ESTIMATION FORM--CONCERNED PARENTS

A number of parents have expressed concerns regarding a perceived discrepancy in skills of prekindergarten teachers as they work in the various interest centers. Some parents have, in fact, expressed a desire for a departmentalized structure wherein each teacher would teach all four classes in her area of specialty.

Based on conversations with parents and/or specific reports made to me, I estimate the number of such parents to be

_____ (how many?)

or

_____ %

of the prekindergarten population.

APPENDIX C

PROBLEM FREQUENCY ESTIMATION FORM

During the first half of the current school year, each pre-kindergarten teacher felt that she spent an inordinate amount of time answering questions from the other three teachers in regard to her daily lesson plans. Valuable time before and after school was taken up by such questions, and frequently classes were interrupted by teachers asking questions.

Please take time to answer the following 3 questions and return this form to your team leader today.

1. I agree/disagree (circle appropriate answer) with the above problem statement.

2. During the first half of the 1983-84 school year, I estimate the frequency of questions from other teachers regarding plans for my interest center to have been:

_____ daily

or

_____ weekly

3. During the first half of the 1983-84 school year, I estimate the frequency of my own questions/problems regarding plans for the 3 interest centers not planned by me to be:

_____ daily

or

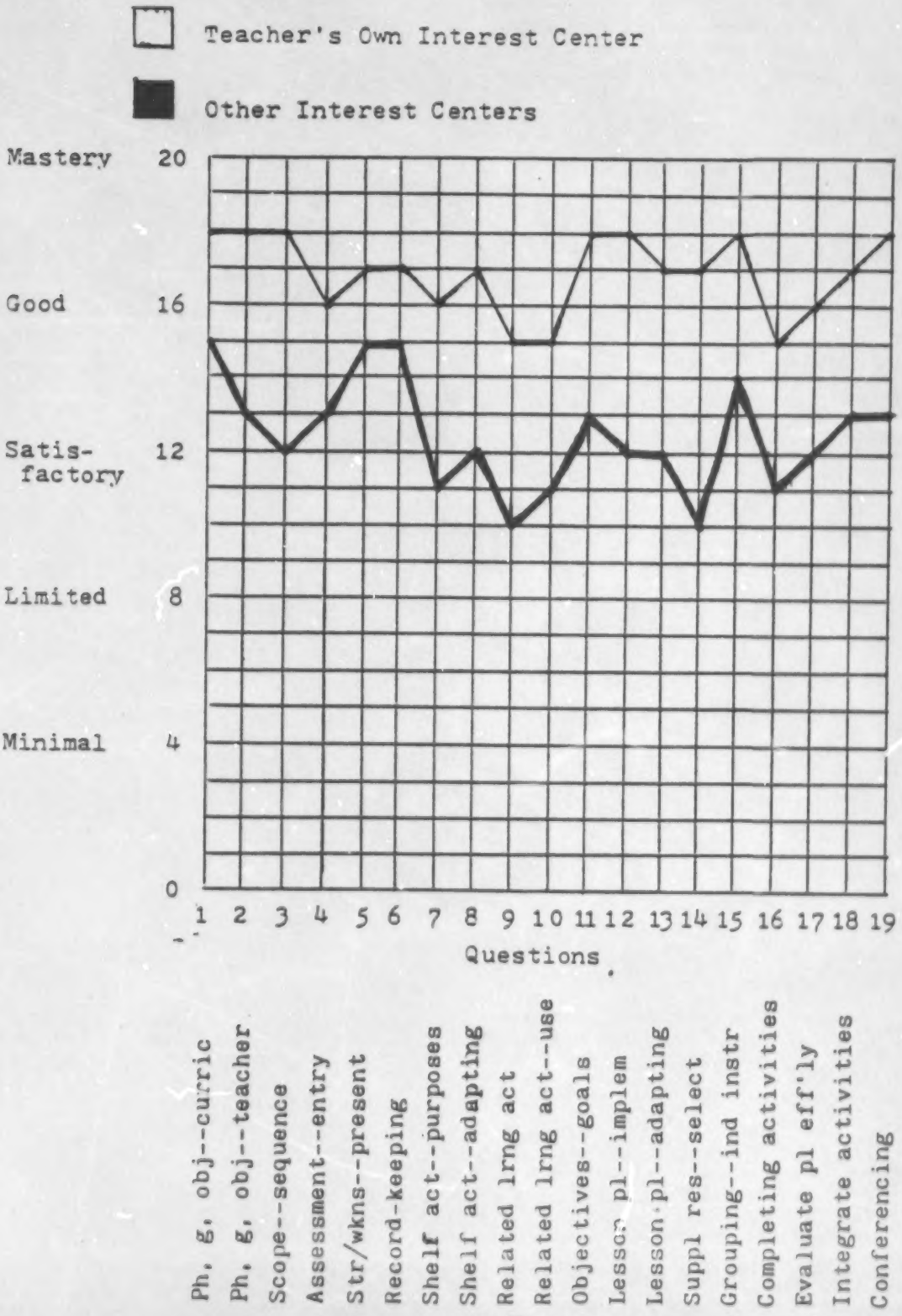
_____ weekly

Thank you for your response.

APPENDIX D

Results of

PRE-QUESTIONNAIRE: Survey of Competence/Confidence



APPENDIX E

Evaluation Form for Inservice Workshops

Please indicate your agreement or disagreement by circling the appropriate response to the following statements:

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	The workshop overall contained information that was useful to me.	5	4	3	2	1
2.	The workshop was well-organized.	5	4	3	2	1
3.	The presenter was well-prepared.	5	4	3	2	1
4.	The instruction in this workshop was interesting and held my attention.	5	4	3	2	1
5.	The length of this workshop was appropriate.	5	4	3	2	1
6.	This workshop brought new ideas to my attention.	5	4	3	2	1
7.	The workshop provided me with useful materials and techniques.	5	4	3	2	1
8.	The workshop provided involvement and participation.	5	4	3	2	1
9.	The presenter was able to answer my questions.	5	4	3	2	1
10.	The workshop brought useful articles and/or books to my attention.	5	4	3	2	1

Please answer the questions on the following page.

1. What were the one or two most valuable things you learned in this workshop?

2. How could this workshop be changed to make it more relevant to you?

3. What specific topics, related to the interest center explored today, would you like to see included in follow-up meetings?

OTHER COMMENTS:

APPENDIX F

CALENDAR PLAN FOR ACTION
(ORIGINAL)

1. January 8 to 31--Prepare preliminaries

   A. Practicum proposal questionnaire
   B. Computer search form
   C. Preliminary literature review

2. February 1 to 5--Prepare evaluation instruments

   A. To document existence of problem as described
   B. To assess present needs

3. February 8, 1984--Administer questionnaire to team members

4. February 9 to 12--Analyze, graph, and summarize data from questionnaire as appropriate

5. February 15--Discuss results with team; schedule workshops

   A. Presented by team members; 1 to 1½ hours in length
   B. Content
      (1) Philosophy and goals
      (2) Objectives, activities, resources, grouping
      (3) Handouts

6. Follow-up meetings

   A. Bi-weekly
   B. March through May, 1984

7. June 1--Administer post-questionnaire

8. June 1 to 8--Evaluate program effectiveness

   A. Tabulate and compare pre/post questionnaire scores
   B. Analyze answers to open-ended questions
   C. Compare frequencies of teachers' questions/problems, pre and post
   D. Interview Lower School Director

9. June 10 to 30, 1984

   A. Compile information
   B. Write final practicum report
   C. Submit final practicum report

APPENDIX G

JOURNAL ARTICLES--STAFF DEVELOPMENT

SOURCE: Champagne, D. W. Does staff development do any good? Educational Leadership, 1980, 37, 400-403.

Reasons for Staff Development

There are many reasons for a clear staff development, supervision, and evaluation program built along the lines I described:

- There is no more complicated, enervating, or frustrating job in the world than teaching. To keep at it, most of us need help and encouragement; staff development is an effective means to provide this encouragement.
- All of us have a need for an outside observer of our work. Each of us has unintegrated behaviors that need to be examined, and supervision provides this outside other.
- We can model appropriate ways of interacting with students by the ways we interact with our staff in our development and supervision program.
- Regular staff development and supervision may assist us in identifying problems and needs of a whole school setting before they become crises.
- The curriculum is constantly changing; new topics need to be integrated into what is taught. New methods of instruction are being developed, tested, and proved useful for student learning. These changes don't just happen; they must be formally planned.
- Due to economic and social conditions, our present staff is likely to be with us for a long time. We can no longer count on new people regularly bringing in new ideas. Development and supervisory programs must perform this function.
- Some people do not know how to best use the resources provided them or how to identify resources they might use effectively. Training identifies these needs and assists utilization.
- We can set clear expectations, plan ways to reach them, implement our plan, and evaluate the reality of our achievements in the context of a staff development and supervision program.
- There are demonstrable results in student learning when a supervisory program focuses on instruction of students.

SOURCE: Wood, F. H., & Thompson, S. R. Guidelines for better staff development. Educational Leadership, 1980, 37, 374-378.

To plan and conduct effective inservice education, we need to be aware of a number of facts related to adult learning:

- Adults will commit to learning something when the goals and objectives of the inservice are considered realistic and important to the learner, that is, job related and perceived as being immediately useful.
- Adults will learn, retain, and use what they perceive is relevant to their personal and professional needs.
- Adult learners need to see the results of their efforts and have accurate feedback about progress toward their goals.
- Adult learning is ego-involved. Learning a new skill, technique, or concept may promote a positive or negative view of self. There is always fear of external judgment that we adults are less than adequate, which produces anxiety during new learning situations such as those presented in inservice training programs.
- Adults come to any learning experience (inservice) with a wide range of previous experiences, knowledge, skills, self-direction, interests, and competence. Individualization, therefore, is appropriate for adults as well as children.
- Adults want to be the origins of their own learning; that is, involved in selection of objectives, content, activities, and assessment in inservice education.
- Adults will resist learning situations which they believe are an attack on their competence, thus the resistance to imposed inservice topics and activities.
- Closely related, adults reject prescriptions by others for their learning, especially when what is prescribed is viewed as an attack on what they are presently doing. Doesn't that sound like current inservice practice? We typically use inservice training to eliminate weakness we see in our personnel.
- Adult motivation for learning and doing one's job has two levels. One is to participate and do an adequate job. The second level is to become deeply involved, going beyond the minimum or norm. The first level of motivation comes as the result of good salary, fringe benefits, and fair treatment. The second builds on the first, but comes from recognition, achievement, and increased responsibility—the result of our behavior and not more dollars.[7]
- Motivation is produced by the learner; all one can do is encourage and create conditions which will nurture what already exists in the adult.
- Adult learning is enhanced by behaviors and inservice that demonstrate respect, trust, and concern for the learner.[8]

"Experiential learning accommodates the special learning styles of adults, and it maximizes the transfer of learning from training setting to application on the job. It has the potential to change and improve the quality of instructional and administrative practice in our schools."

SOURCE: Wood, F. H., & Thompson, S. R. Guidelines for better staff development. Educational Leadership, 1980, 37, 374-378.

Experiential learning—learning by doing—includes: (a) an initial limited orientation followed by participation activities in a real setting to experience and implement what is to be learned—the skill, concept, strategy; (b) an examination and analysis of the experience in which learners identify the effect their actions; (c) an opportunity to generalize summarize when the learners develop their own ciples and identify applications of those princi and (d) an opportunity to return to try out their ciples in the work setting and develop confidenc using what is learned.

The second key finding comes from researcl the Rapports[12] in England and Allen Tough[13] in ada. Their work suggests that adults prefer to l in informal learning situations where social inte tion can take place among the learners. This im the need to plan inservice that occurs in the no work setting.

Proposed Guidelines for Effective Staff Development

In summary, what educators say about staff development and what we know about adult learners suggest that inservice educators should:

1. Include more participant control over the "what" and "how" of learning;
2. Focus on job related tasks that the participants consider real and important;
3. Provide choices and alternatives that accommodate the differences among participants;
4. Include opportunities for participants in inservice training to practice what they are to learn in simulated and real work settings as part of their training;
5. Encourage the learners to work in small groups and to learn from each other; and
6. Reduce the use and threat of external judgments from one's superior by allowing peer-participants to give each other feedback concerning performance and areas of needed improvement.

James Coleman points out several advantages of experientially-based training. First, the understandings developed are tied not to abstract ideas but rather to concrete experiences that can be drawn upon when the teacher or administrator faces similar situations on the job. Another strength of this approach to inservice education is that the principles and skills developed through experiential learning are remembered more easily because they are tied to a sequence of personal actions and consequences. Finally, and probably most important to those responsible for staff development, learning by doing is more likely to be applied in the job setting.[14]

SOURCE: Vacca, J. L. How to be an effective staff developer for content teachers. Journal of Reading, 1983, 26, 293-296.

The following list of criteria are stated in positive terms; they are critical aspects of specific ways in which leaders implement staff development.

Content delivery

Uses active involvement techniques such as role-playing.
Avoids straight lecture method.
Maintains balance between group participation and presentation of information.
Demonstrates ideas and strategies with classroom examples.
Demonstrates materials that have immediate use in classroom.

Personal influence

Is enthusiastic and interested in the topic.
Is dynamic and stimulates excitement.
Relates to group in open, honest, friendly way.
Answers questions patiently.
Respects participants as peers.
Possesses a sense of humor.

Professional competence

Is knowledgeable about the topic.
Has clear objectives in mind.
Is well organized.
Keeps on schedule.
Explains procedures and gives directions for all activities.
Adheres to the topic.
Uses audiovisual materials with skill.
Allows time for questions.

Arrangements

Assesses needs of group in advance of presentation.
Uses seating arrangements appropriate for group size and type of activity.
Attends to comfort of group through room temperature.
Gives breaks as needed.
Adjusts noise levels as needed.
Schedules sessions at time other than immediately after school if possible.

Conclusions

Teachers want to be involved in staff development sessions in which their time is not wasted. They prefer ideas, strategies, and materials that relate directly to their own classrooms. These should be presented or demonstrated by someone who is knowledgeable and enthusiastic and who respects participants' experiences.

Staff developers have a complex leadership role, one for which selection and evaluation criteria should be used. These criteria need to apply to many types of circumstances in which adults participate in learning.

Realistically, effective staff development requires the same high quality of delivery demanded by teachers in general. The populations of teachers in this study were widely diverse, yet their responses all point in the same direction: The behaviors of staff developers make or break staff development experiences, and those behaviors are not peculiar to urban, bilingual, desegregating, or mainstreaming school districts.

Regardless of the subject of a staff development program, teachers respond favorably to competent delivery.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

APPENDIX H

TEAM WORKSHOP--Play and Communicate

Part I--Reading Readiness, Pre-Reading, Beginning Reading Skills

AGENDA

I. Philosophy--readiness
   A. Statements--Haley/Hillerich
   B. Traditional readiness concepts (why reading instruction was begun at age 6 and how these concepts are invalid for most children today)
      1. Mental age 6 to 6½
      2. Visual maturity
      3. Language development
      4. Experience
      5. Motivation
      6. Social development
      7. Visual discrimination
      8. Auditory discrimination
   C. Basic language skills--essential for reading (Hillerich)
      1. Auditory discrimination
      2. Listening comprehension
      3. Recalling sequence of events
      4. Oral language development--general
      5. Oral language development--vocabulary
      6. Ability to follow oral directions
      7. Ability to use oral context
   D. Six major pre-reading skills (Forgan)
      1. Visual-motor coordination
      2. Auditory skills
      3. Visual skills
      4. Concept development
      5. Oral language
      6. Readiness for books

II. Goals--prekindergarten year (Haley)

A. For most children

1. Recognizing letters
2. Associating letters with sounds
3. Establishing concept of word
4. Identifying initial sounds of words
5. Establishing left-right progression
6. Identifying final consonant sounds of words

B. Advanced children

1. Endoding 3-letter phonetic words (short vowel sounds)
2. Decoding 3-letter phonetic words (short vowel sounds)
3. Sight words as necessary
4. Beginning reading
   a. Word cards--made into sentences
   b. Sentence cards
   c. Books

C. Compare to Hillerich's "Prereading: Foundation Skills in Decoding"

1. Using oral context
2. Discriminating letter forms
3. Identifying beginning sounds
4. Associating consonant letters and sounds
5. Using oral context and initial consonant sound associations to read word
6. Left-to-right orientation
7. Recognizing high frequency words

III. Scope and sequence

A. Introduction/orientation (first one to two months)

1. Classroom routine, behavior
2. Independent working skills
3. Introduction to classroom materials, use, cleanup

B. Sound-of-the-Week (beginning mid-October)
   1. Simple consonants
   2. Short vowel /a/
   3. Other vowels interspersed with consonants

C. Beginning reading skills (when appropriate)
   1. Encoding
   2. Decoding
   3. Sight words
   4. Sentences
   5. Books

D. Other concepts
   1. What--concept/category words, opposites, rhyming words, positional words, color words
   2. How---pegboard, books, shelf activities, group activities, games with parent volunteers, Show and Tell

IV. Daily plans
   A. OBJECTIVES
   B. ACTIVITIES
   C. RESOURCES
   D. GROUPING

V. Other activities
   A. Wednesday's activities
   B. Thursday's activities
   C. Day books, language experience stories, Show and Tell, book reading
   D. Language Lab--typewriter System 80, tape/book, Legos, other

TEAM WORKSHOP--Play and Communicate

ADDENDUM to Reading Component (Part I)

PHILOSOPHY (presenter's own)

The goal--whether in terms of reading readiness, pre-reading skills, or beginning reading--is to take the child from where he or she is at entry, work with him or her on as individualized a basis as is humanly possible given limitations of time and staff and go as far as we can by June--taking into consideration the child's interest level as well as ability level.

SOME THOUGHTS from Hillerich (1977)

Readiness--A continuously developing process from birth to death--that is, each experience and strengthening of skill makes individual ready for the next step.

It begins with the abilities to perceive visually and auditorily and extends to the ability to function receptively and expressively in language.

At whatever point more formal or intensive instruction intervenes in the natural informal development of the learner, that intervention must begin by identifying the level of the learner's development and must result in placing that learner into appropriate experiences on the continuum.

ABOUT INSTRUCTION (from Mager, 1984)

Be sure that there is a need for the instruction:

a. That students don't already know what is being "taught"

b. That instruction is the best means for bringing about the desired change

A BIT MORE PHILOSOPHY (presenter's own)

Once a child is ready to read--beginning to read--the goal is to unlock a strange word. The child can use oral context and even picture clues along with letter/sound association (phonics). The idea is for the child to get meaning and enjoyment from the author's printed ideas.

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APPENDIX I

TEAM WORKSHOP--Play and Communicate

Part II--Pre-Writing and Writing Skills

AGENDA

1. Discuss the 2 articles distributed to and read by teammates prior to today's meeting.

2. Explain and demonstrate activities in the new pre-Writing/Writing Center to teammates.

Lamme, Linda Leonard. "Handwriting in an Early Childhood Curriculum." Young Children, November, 1979, 20-26.

I. Skills prerequisite for handwriting

   A. Small muscle development

   B. Eye-hand coordination

   C. Holding a writing tool

   D. Basic strokes

   E. Letter perception

   F. Orientation to printed language

II. Activities to enhance development of above skills--see article for extensive list

III. Important considerations

   A. Left-handers--group together; demonstrate using left hand

   B. Far-to-near copying difficult

      1. Copy underneath model
      2. Copy from nearby model

   C. Tracing--of dubious value; focus on lines/dots rather than perceiving overall letter/word

D. Hierarchy of difficulty using writing utensils--easy to difficult

1. Marker
2. Chalk
3. Crayon
4. Pencil

E. Correct position and grasp of utensil

1. Stress; tight grasp or teeth
2. Depth of impression

F. Basic strokes smooth, appropriate direction, clean intersections (drawings)

G. Adult modeling of proper letter formation and finished product

H. Reversals

1. Help child see difference
2. Give child practice in dealing correctly with symbols

a. Correct beginning point
b. Correct direction of motion
c. Correct sequence of multipart letters

I. Motivation--seeing the whole

J. Assess individual differences

1. Prewriting activities
2. Careful beginning instruction

K. Parent involvement

Burton, Grace M. "Writing Numerals: Suggestions for Helping Children." Academic Therapy, 1982 17, 415-427.

I. Fading process

A. Strong clear stimulus
B. Gradual reduction of clues

II. Prewriting skills

A. Grasp writing instrument properly
B. Position paper properly
C. Copy from model

III. Analyzing the form

A. A rote task
B. Analyze parts aloud
C. Studying whole configuration

IV. Reversals

A. Gentle correction, continued modeling
B. Lack of concern regarding directions--a cause
C. Lack of ability to distinguish directions--another cause

V. Dominance

VI. Learning activities

A. Vary media

1. Sandpaper
2. Yarn on posterboard
3. Nubby fabric on cards
4. Wood puzzles

B. Practice suggestions--see article

C. Worksheets--see article for tips

Explain and demonstrate activities--New Pre-Writing/Writing Center

OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITIES	RESOURCES	GROUPING

APPENDIX J

TEAM WORKSHOP--Play and Imagine

AGENDA

"Playing and imagining is, therefore, not merely a way of looking at the education process (a philosophy), or a way of helping the individual develop (a psychology), or of assisting the individual to adjust to his environment (a soliology); it is the basic way in which the human being learns--and thus is the most effective method for all forms of education."

(Richard Courtney, 1968)

I. Philosophy (presenter's own)

Creative play and imagine should play a natural part of growing up and "trying on the world." To me, it is an exploration and an expression. As the children play out a scene or build something with Tinker Toys and blocks, as well as other manipulatives, they are experiencing life and acting out their conceptualization of it.

II. Objectives--Children will

A. Develop empathy

B. See themselves as unique individuals

C. Be sensitive to their environment

D. Understand simple relationships

E. Increase the flow of their ideas

F. Be able to communicate feelings and ideas

III. Curriculum--Rationale

A. What is the value of play and imagine in our prekindergarten curriculum?

1. Play and imagine is experience.

2. Play and imagine produces a heightened sense of reality.

3. Play and imagine helps children develop a greater awareness.

4. Play and imagine helps children gain a sense of interrelationships.

B. How does play and imagine fit into the language arts curriculum?

1. Oral language

2. Listening

C. What skills enhance children's play and imagine experience?

1. Awareness

2. Imagination

3. Physical control

IV. Methods and activities

A. How can I teach play and imagine effectively?

1. Develop specific skills

2. Special teaching techniques

B. How can puppets play an important role in play and imagine?

APPENDIX K

TEAM WORKSHOP--Play and Learn

AGENDA

"The background of experience of the child determines the starting point when he comes to school. If he has not been fortunate enough to have enjoyed a rich and varied set of activities in these early years--if he has not been able to discuss these with someone who uses language with flexibility and imagination, then these opportunities must be made available in school as a first priority, for on such a foundation does his future development depend."

(Maffei & Buckley, 1980)

I. Philosophy (presenter's own)

Education is a life-long process, developing both the cognitive and affective domains, as the individual progresses through activities appropriate to his/her level of ability and readiness. In the area of mathematics, the teacher should provide opportunities to stimulate learning. Through various activities, games, manipulatives, and individual exploration, the students will be motivated to reach their potential. In my opinion, it is the process and approach of education which are the critical factors in developing the cognitive domain.

II. Development of intellectual thought (Piaget)

A. Stages (ages are approximate)

1. Sensorimotor period (1 to 2 years)
2. Preoperational period (2 to 7 years)
3. Period of concrete operations (7 to 11 years)
4. Period of formal operations (11 to 15 years)

According to Piaget these stages must be sequential for normal intellectual development to occur. A child must encounter enough learning experiences in each period in order to proceed to the next step.

B. Factors for Development

Piaget's 4 factors have direct bearing on whether or not a child progresses from one stage to the next.

1. Organic growth and maturation

2. Experiences

3. Social interactions

4. Equilibration--process through which the child incorporates new knowledge

C. Preoperational period (2 to 7)

PreK children are at this level and need to be guided at a steady pace through this period. Valuable experiences will allow them the opportunity to move on to the next level. Within the area of mathematics children usually do not move on to the next level until age 9 or 10.

D. Six factors which limit the preoperational child from reasoning and thinking logically

1. Egocentrism--Child is self-centered in thinking, believing everyone thinks as he does. His thinking is right. There is one point of view and that is his. Recognize preschoolers' inability to engage in formal reasoning. Egocentric children learn best with less abstract and less formal "hands-on" materials.

2. States--Child is unable to follow transformations in sequence. (ex., falling crayon)

3. Transductive reasoning--inability to think inductively or deductively. Child moves from particular to particular by means of a reasoning process having no logical necessity.

4. Centration-- Child centers on external characteristics and is unable to rationally stand back and weigh the situation.

5. Irreversibility--Child is unable to realize when the water in test tube is transferred to beaker that the beaker has the same amount of water.

6. Inability to conserve--Conservation is impossible because child has not acquired the notion of number, only perceptual whole. Conservacomes naturally and should not be rushed or taught.

III. Curriculum factors

A. Setting the foundation

1. Thinking ability develops before language ability. By not realizing this, we tend to teach memory over understanding. Children must be given the opportunity to experience new ideas before they learn them by rote.

"Education has of necessity to be preparatory in the sense of familiarizing the child with the subject matter of the rules he will be learning later. Learning numbers and letters, drawing, practice in classifying and ordering materials, all acquaint the child with the material that he will order according to explicit rules at some later time." (Elkind)

2. Children do not think or act according to rules. They perceive things as real, later reason as to rule.

B. Tools

1. Enable children to experience ideas for themselves

a. Action-oriented

b. Manipulative

2. Television

"Sesame Street syndrome"--figurative knowledge, static reproductions of images and perceptions based on memory of imitation

Doesn't supply the means for producing "true knowledge," which results from active manipulation of the environment. Children cannot actually touch and experience the differences in sizes or shapes of the objects seen. This learning rests on memorization.

C. Teaching strategy

1. How does a child learn? (in an open, hands-on environment)

2. Teacher instruction? (indirect methods)

3. Is teaching formal or informal? (informal)

D. Guided Discovery Learning (Jerome Bruner)

1. Socratic method--the asking of a series of easily-answered questions leading to a logical conclusion to be arrived at by the student

2. Making up certain sequences of pattern-type problems that allow a student to find regularities

3. The projection by the teacher of an attitude of interest, daring, and excitement

4. Providing the student interesting clues to short cuts so that he may discover for himself other techniques for short cuts

E. When can math be taught?

1. Planned lessons

a. Individual lessons

b. Small groups

c. Entire class

2. Math concepts in daily routine

3. Integrating math with other subjects

4. Incidental teaching

IV. Aims of the early childhood math program

1. Classification and sorting

2. Ordering

3. Counting

   a. Rote counting--important. but not functional

   b. Rational counting

      (1) One-to-one correspondence
      (2) When to stop
      (3) Last number named counts the set

   c. Transitivity

   d. Uses of numbers

      (1) Cardinal numbers
      (2) Ordinal numbers
      (3) Labels
      (4) Position

4. Numerals

   a. Recognize symbols which are alike

   b. Visual perception

   c. Read symbol

   d. Associate word to numeral

   e. Copy and trace figures

   f. Write numerals

5. Readiness for addition

   a. Meaningful

   b. Developmentally appropriate

6. Geometry

   a. Topological ideas

   b. Shapes

   c. Measurement

V. Explain and demonstrate uses of materials

CONCLUSION

"The best mathematics program for any child is the one constructed to his or her specific needs and abilities. Activities which only rehash previously conceptualized ideas are too easy. They quickly become boring and provide no growth. On the other hand, children who are expected to master topics for which their internal logical development is not prepared face the same negative results. Maturity of thought is needed to understand the structure of our decimal number system. A child can be taught to parrot by rote that the 6 in 64 stands for tens and that after 60 comes 70. Superficial learning is at best, worthless, and at most, harmful. It is one of the reasons that so many teenagers and adults avoid mathematics. Teachers must know where to start and when to stop."

(Maffei & Buckley, 1980)

Reference

Maffei, A. C., & Buckley, P. Teaching Preschool Math: Foundations and Activities. New York: Human Sciences Press, 1980.

TEAM WORKSHOP--Play and Discover

AGENDA

I. Philosophy

Being involved in the day-to-day educational process with young children, we really do not act as "teachers." Our responsibility is to provide an environment that encourages and allows the children to teach themselves. This environment must be rich and sustaining to promote growth and learning. This especially applies to the areas of art and science.

II. Environment

A. Modeling--In order to promote an enriching situation in which each child can learn at his own pace, the teacher, as a role model, is a powerful teaching tool. Learning takes place as the young child observes the attitudes, habits, and actions of the teacher. An example involves the care of plants in the classroom. The young child observes the attitude toward plants that the teacher displays. Children observe how the teacher cares for plants, not necessarily how they are told to care for them. The teacher often creates an atmosphere for learning through modeling.

B. Emotional Support and Love--Teachers must also provide the needed emotional support and love that will allow children to come to value themselves as worthy and successful. Children must be rewarded for success and for appropriate behavior so that they might learn that there is justification for their behavior and positive value for learning.

TEACHING SCIENCE

I. Individualization

A. Prescriptive/Diagnostic--The teacher constantly assesses the growth of each student and provides activities necessary to obtain the desired achievement.

B. Personalized Program--The teacher allows the learner to choose from a number of topics or objectives.

C. Self-directed Activities--The teacher chooses topics and objectives but permits the child to choose learning activities.

D. Independent Study--The student chooses the topic, objectives, and learning activities that meet instructional goals.

II. Preparedness--One of the glaring problems in teaching children--and particularly in teaching science--all too frequently becomes apparent when teachers are asked questions like, "What main or supporting concepts or skills are you teaching in this learning experience?"

A. Understand the concept--If the teacher is not aware of the main thrust or concept(s) of an activity, it is simply not possible for her to take advantage of the occasion to reinforce it. In a moment when the child is ripe for conceptualizing, the teacher is unable to deliver with power and clarity.

B. Identify the concept--The teacher should state the concept at the beginning of the lesson. ("Today we are going to see how magnets work.")

C. Perform the task or experiment--In cause and effect projects the children will be able to see for themselves what happens if you do this to that. Children learn very readily by this method and they are usually eager to try the task on their own to see if they can "make it work."

D. Reinforce the concept verbally--The teacher should state what has occurred or, better yet, encourage the child to tell what happened and then to state the concept. ("I rubbed the balloon on my head. It picked up the paper. That was static electricity." Mikey Rush)

E. Show enthusiasm--The teacher must be enthuastic about what she is doing. Teaching science is exciting. The children can sense this by her enthusiasm.

III. Difficulty

A. Complete understanding not necessary--A child should be given experiences and experiments he may not completely understand but which will give him or her the basis for future knowledge.

B. Use of the environment--The teacher can teach or at least point out concepts to the children using the materials/situations around them.

IV. Suggestions for teaching science

A. Questions--Ask questions that will encourage children to:

1. Hypothesize
2. Identify the results
3. Predict
4. Explore other possibilities

B. Handout

TEACHING ART

I. Introduction

Getting kids interested in art is a fairly simple matter. Just introduce them to a new medium or technique and away they will go. But once the excitement wears off, even the youngest children may become more critical of the esthetic value of their completed artistic endeavors. They probably won't understand exactly why they are dissatisfied, of course, but chances are it will be because their "masterpieces" lack well-balanced designs.

In teaching art it is perfectly permissible to teach spacing and a little design. If you see a child struggling with something, help her by suggesting that the dog has four legs or a head has a round shape.

II. Materials

Many children habitually miniaturize everything they paint. One of the best ways to break them of this tendency is to set an example by working very large yourself. Don't hesitate to initiate broad strokes for the child who is having difficulty letting go with her brush.

A. Large-sized supplies

B. Ample time for each child to create

III. Classics as examples

Even young children will respond to art classics in a positive way. They may not totally understand the work (as many adults don't), but they can become familiar with different styles, use of color, etc.

IV. A few thoughts

When compared with cognitively-oriented tasks, such as pre-math and phonics, children's learning in the arts is more difficult to measure and specify. Because of the emphasis on teaching formal skills and because goals in such activities as painting, working with play dough, dancing, and dramatic play are not easily articulated and measured, the arts are often relegated to a position of relative unimportance. This is a mistake on the part of the teacher or educator of young children (Croft/Kiser).

Conclusion

In science and art the child has great opportunity for satisfying his or her curiosity and for learning. He doesn't have to know any letters or sounds to be able to understand static electricity or magnets. He does not have to know any numbers in order to express himself with paint, crayons, construction paper, egg cartons, or clay. In Play and Discover we offer opportunity for each child to be successful and to feel good about what she does.

References

Brown, S. E. Bubbles, Rainbows, & Worms. Mr. Ranier, MD: Gryphon House, Inc., 1981.

Croft, D. J., & Hess, R. D. An Activities Handbook for Teachers of Young Children (2nd ed.). Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1975.

APPENDIX M

POST-QUESTIONNAIRE:
REVISED INTRODUCTION

QUESTIONNAIRE

Survey of Competence/Confidence

NOTE: Tense was revised as appropriate in the preface to the QUESTIONNAIRE and in the open-ended question (question 20) as follows:

It was pointed out by observers of the prekindergarten program that there appeared to be a discrepancy in the skills of the teachers as they traveled from one interest center to the next with their classes. Primarily, it was felt that each teacher was more competent/confident in the area for which she planned.

To resolve this problem and to reduce such discrepancies, a series of workshops to strengthen prekindergarten teachers' skills in all interest centers was held. In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the workshops, please rate your level of competence/confidence at the end of the 1983-1984 school year in (1) the interest center for which you planned and (2) the 3 interest centers planned by teammates, according to the following scale:

(The rating scale and the first 19 questions were identical to those in the pre-questionnaire--Apendix A).

20. After reflecting upon your experience as a planner/team member/teacher during the past school year, list specific needs and concerns you now have and what specific information, instruction, etc., you feel you still need to maximize your feelings of competence/confidence in any of the four interest centers of the prekindergarten. Include any suggestions for the August 1984 six-day inservice time.

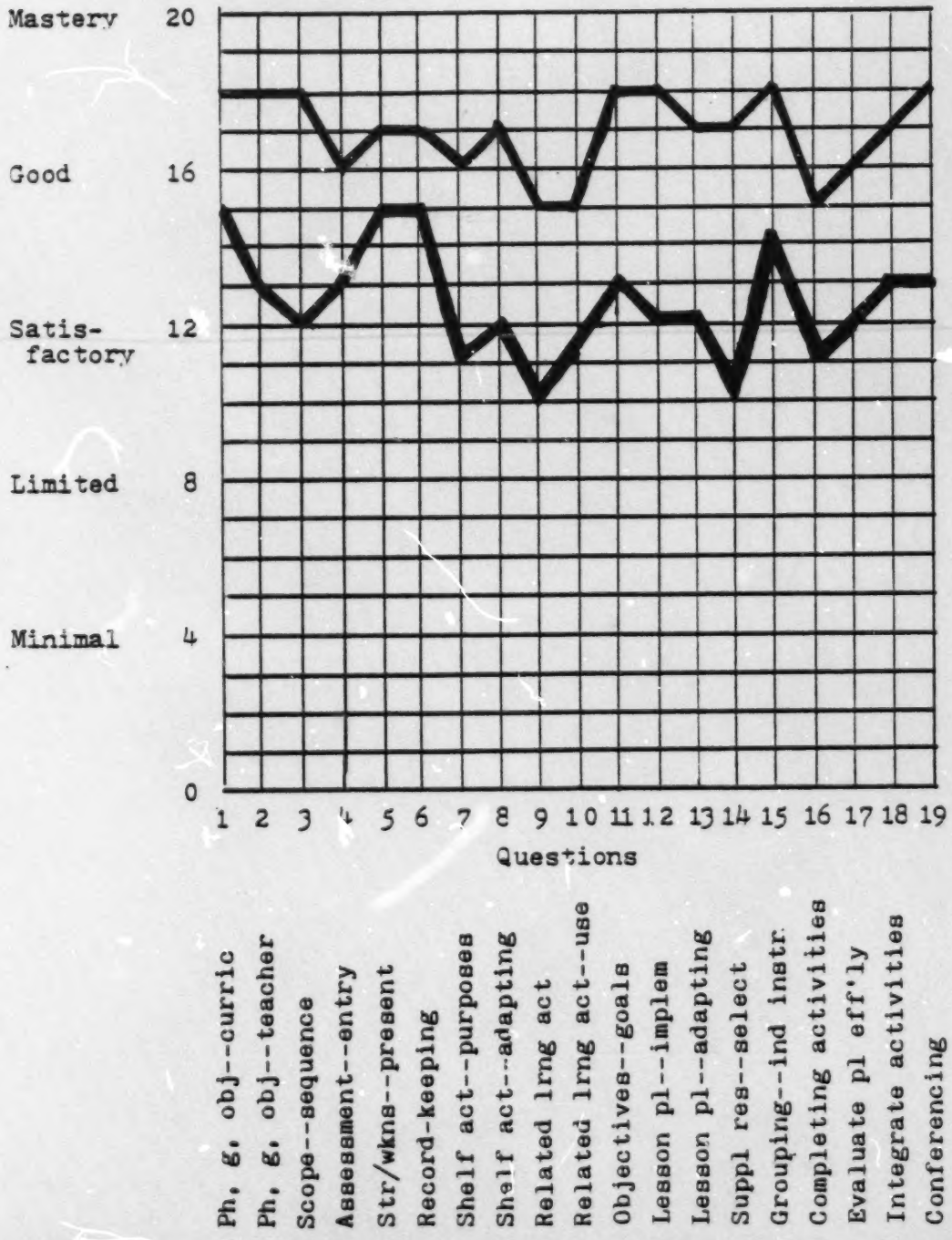
APPENDIX N

GRAPHS:
PRE/POST QUESTIONNAIRE DATA

Results of
PRE-QUESTIONNAIRE: Survey of Competence/Confidence

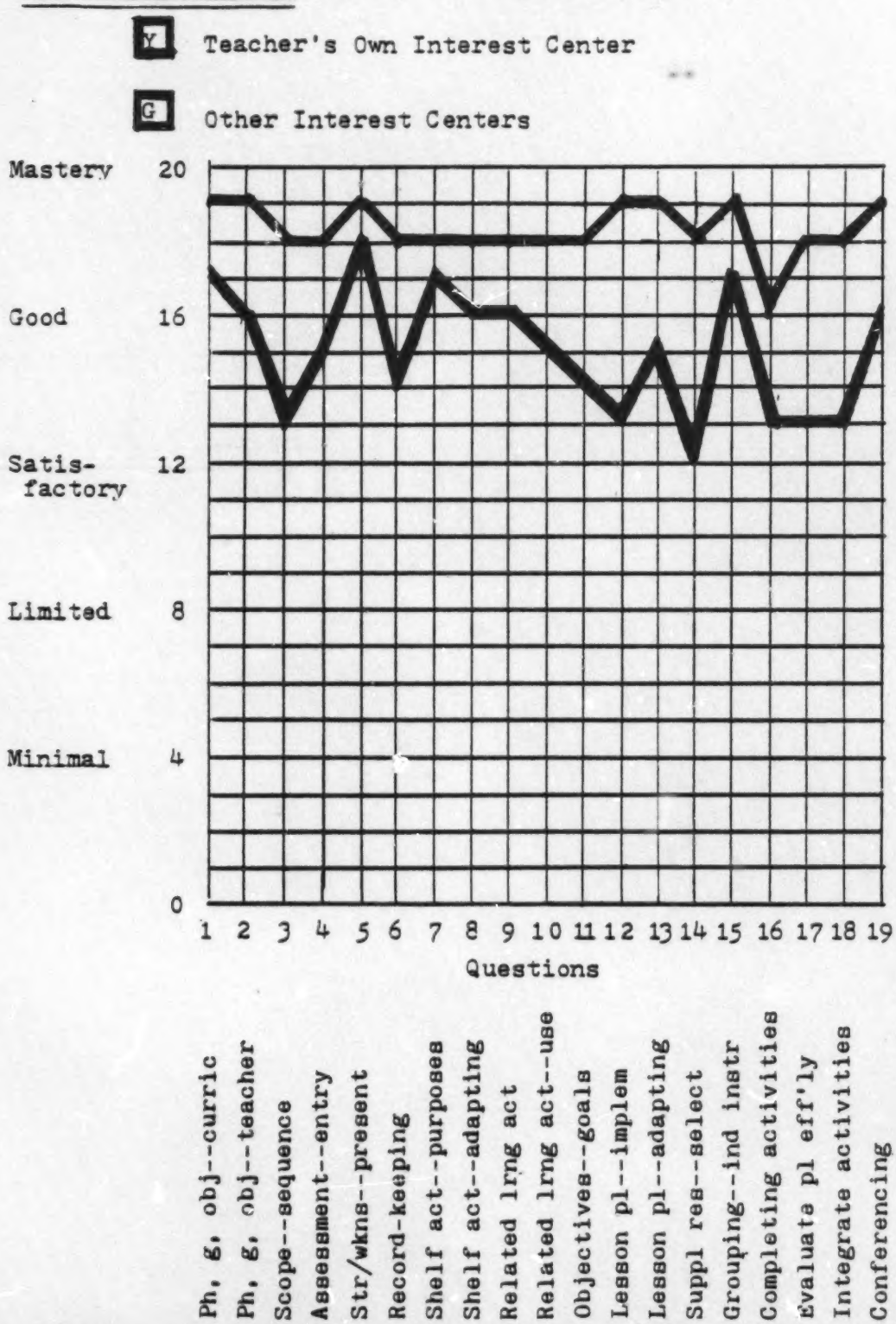
Y Teacher's Own Interest Center

G Other Interest Centers



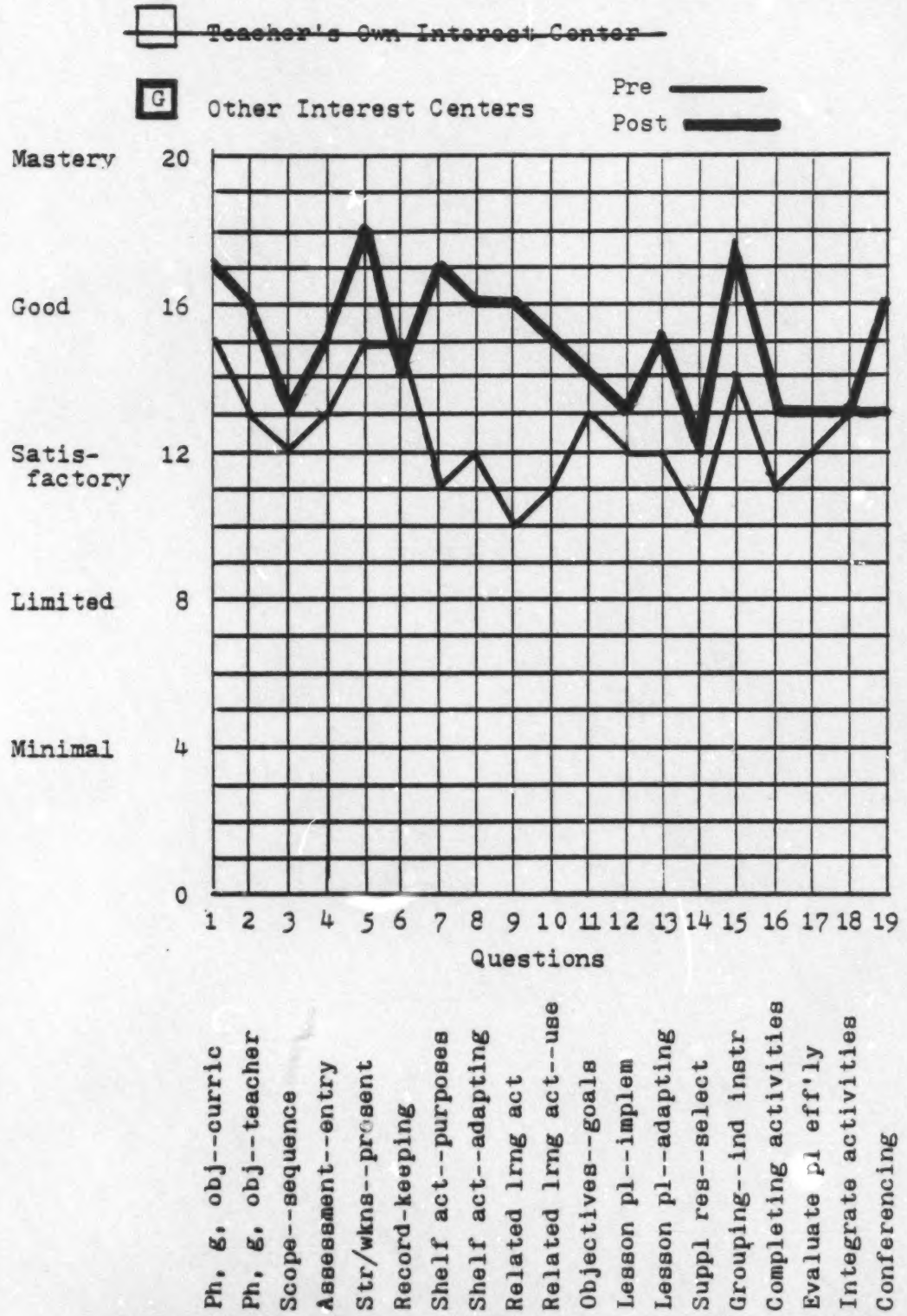
Results of

POST-QUESTIONNAIRE: Survey of Competence/Confidence



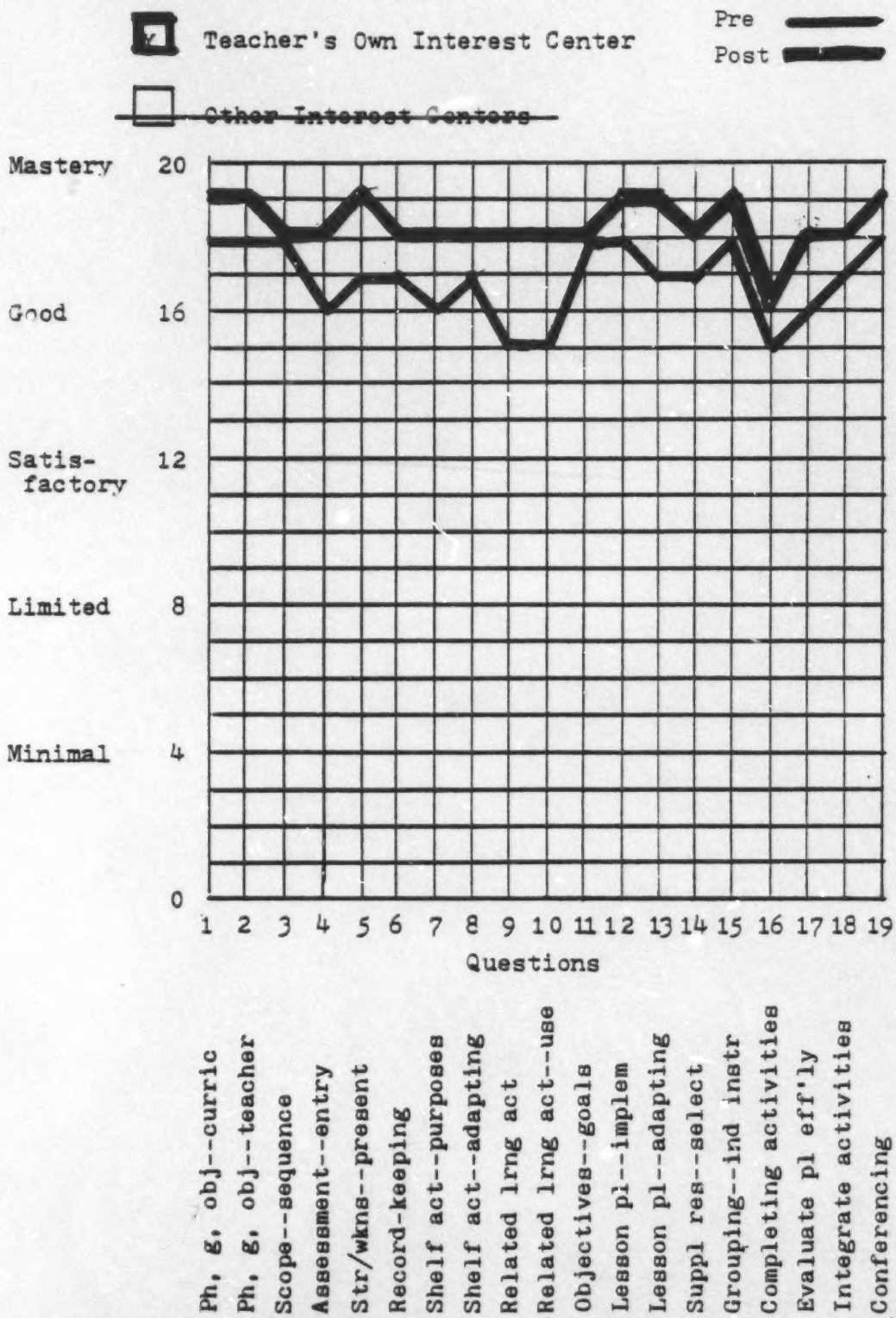
Results of

QUESTIONNAIRE: Survey of Competence/Confidence



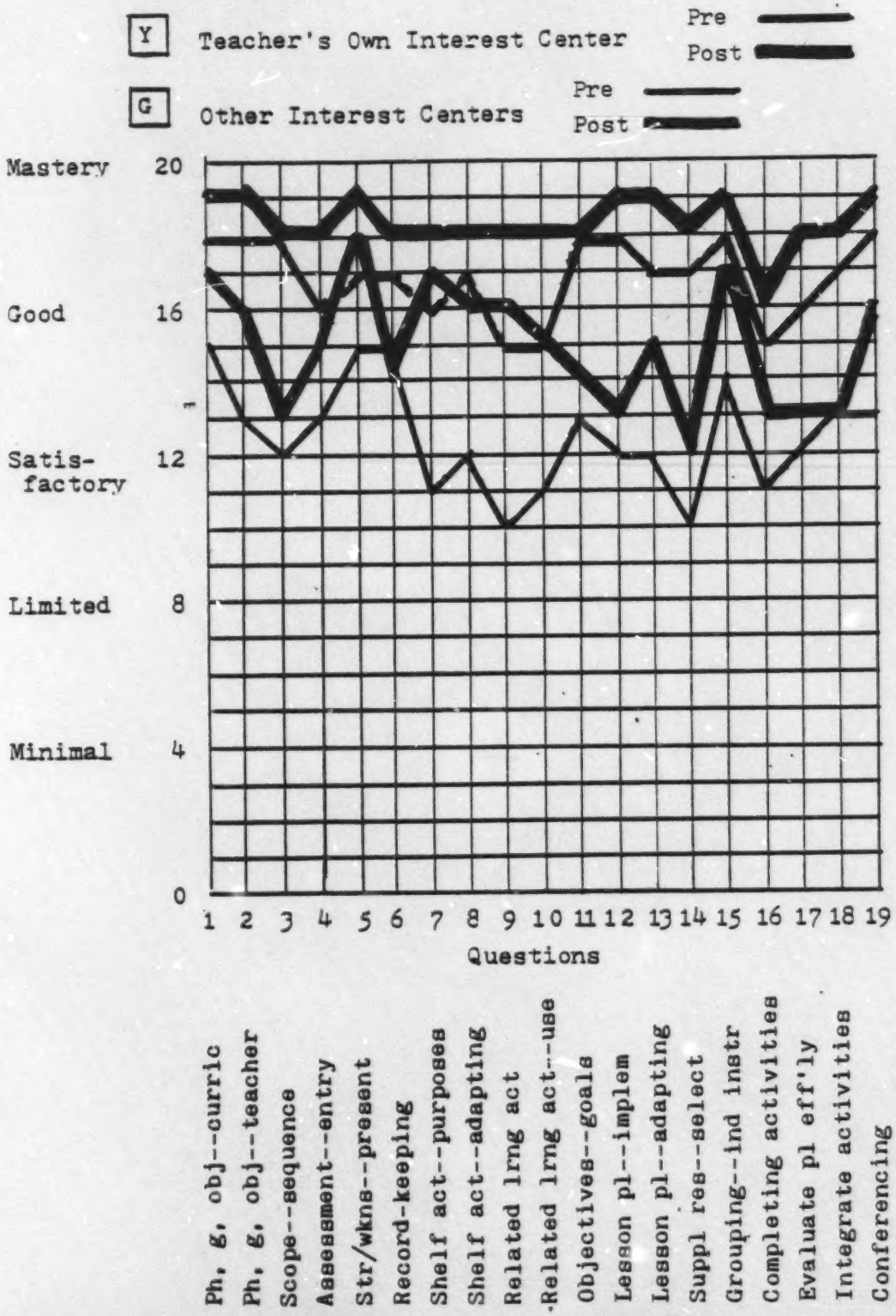
Results of

QUESTIONNAIRE: Survey of Competence/Confidence



Results of

QUESTIONNAIRE: Survey of Competence/Confidence



APPENDIX O

LETTER FOR DISSEMINATION

July, 1984

Dr. Joseph D. Randazzo, Headmaster
The University School
7500 S. W. 36th Street
Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33314

Dear Dr. Randazzo:

I've recently submitted a written report to the faculty of the Early Childhood Education Program of Nova University in candidacy for the Doctorate of Education. The goal of the program detailed in the report was to increase prekindergarten teachers' skills as well as their personal feelings of competence and confidence as they worked in interest centers set up and planned by other teachers.

I've attached a copy of the abstract of this project's report to this letter. If you would like to receive a copy of the entire written report please contact me and I will forward it to you.

Sincerely,

Virginia Haley